

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Somerset

WITH

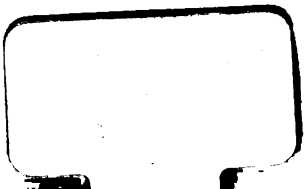
THE SEVERN SEA

A POEM

BY

John Draper

Joseph Addr. Somerset
fo. 44.



Digitized by Google

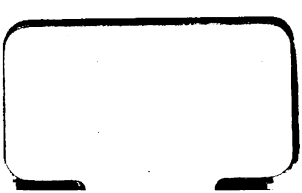
Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Joseph Addison Somerset Co.
Fo. 44.



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Somerset,

WITH

THE SEVERN SEA:

A Poem,

WITH HISTORICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

NOTES.

BY

John Draper.

Go, look through merrie Englande,
Of all the shires you there may see,
O, the fairest is green Somerset,
The flower of all the West Countrié.
Old Ballad.

LONDON:
HAMILTON, ADAMS, & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW.
I. E. CHILLCOTT, CLARE STREET, BRISTOL.
S. W. SIMMS, GEORGE STREET, BATH.

1867.

Digitized by Google



BRISTOL:
I. E. CHILLCOTT, STEAM PRESS, CLARE STREET.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

In occasional wanderings, during his professional pursuit as an Artist, over the district he has endeavoured to describe, the thought had frequently occurred to the author of the following poem—how very little of the interest and beauty attached to its historical events, and rich and varied scenery, was known, or even suspected, by the majority of travellers and tourists. This may, in some measure, be accounted for, by the fact, that until of late years, the western portion of it, with its sea-margin, by far the more picturesque and beautiful, was comparatively *terra incognita;* so small was the intercourse in search of health, or pleasure, connected with it. It only required, therefore, in these days, to be better known, in some way or other, through the medium of the press, in order to be sought after.

Influenced by such thoughts and feelings, the author imagined he might throw his rambles into verse, accompanied with illustrative Notes, as the

Digitized by Google

more attractive mode of making it known; whilst, if the attempt possessed any merit, it would also excite more interest, and perhaps live somewhat longer than a description in prose.

Without arrogating to himself, in the slightest degree, the talent or the power of those great men who have done so much by their works, to diffuse the fame and increase the wealth of those districts over which they have spread and left the mantle of their genius—the author quotes, with pleasure, the following appropriate passages from a popular writer* of our day, as some apology, for his own more humble production.

"The man of genius is often looked upon as a being that shuts himself up, and knows little of what is going on in the real world around him. He is supposed to live in a fairy land of his own creation—often a very barren and profitless one—full of all manner of enchantments and magical delusions. In reference to him, men of arts and sciences, the men of spinning-jennies and steam-engines—nay, the naturalists and many other writers—talk of themselves as *practical* men. They often smile at the poet and the romance-writer, as men of the world affect to do, and say, 'O! a very clever, a very clever fellow indeed; but as ignorant of actual life as a child.' But the poets and

* William Howitt.

Digitized by Google

romancers of late have proved themselves both to be profitable fellows and practical ones."

After mentioning Scott and Byron, Southey, Wordsworth, and others, he proceeds:—

"These are your dreamers and thriftless poets of the present days! But they are not merely the profitable, they are the really practical men too. We ask, where would your Watts and Boltons be, if it were not for them? Why, it is they—it is the men of poetical genius—who build your steam-boats and steam-coaches. The man of genius is not now merely a scrawler on paper, a writer of poems or of tales; but his pen is become a magician's wand—the most potent one that was ever wielded: and while other men think that he is merely inditing some pleasant lay, or matter for a winter evening's fire-side, they who see further into a mile-stone know that he is building ships and boats, steam-engines and steam-carriages; launching new and splendid packets; laying down railroads, and carrying them through mountain and forest; erecting inns, furnishing them with hosts, and guests, and waiters; and spreading tables with every delicacy of the season. * * * So rapidly does the spirit of the poetical and picturesque spread—so wonderfully do the numbers of its votaries increase, seeking a little easement of their swollen purses, a little outlet for all their taste and enthusiasm.

Digitized by Google

"'And when did all this grow up?'—'O,' say the mechanic heads, 'why, when steam created such facilities.' Yes, since the steam of poetic brains created them. Where would your steam-boats and your railroads have been leading us, do you think, if Bishop Percy had not collected the glorious ballads of nature and of heroism that were scattered over Scotland and England—the leaves of a new Sibyl, a million times more fateful and pregnant with wonders than the old; if Bishop Percy had not done this, and set on fire the kindred heads of Southey, of Wordsworth, and of Scott; if ballads and eclogues of a new school, if poems full of a pensive beauty and a pure love, had not been framed by Southey; if Wordsworth had not—stricken, as he confesses, by the mighty power of nature, through this very medium—gone wandering all over the mountains of Cumberland, filling his heart with the life of the hills, and the soul of the over-arching heaven, and the peace or passion of human existence hidden in glens and recesses where poets had ceased to look for them, where would these steam-boats and railroads now have been leading their passengers? They would be going, not the pack-horse, but the railroad round of dull and wearisome commerce, wearing out its own soul by its over drudgery; and, even of these, there would not have been a tithe of the present outgoers. But now, the

Digitized by Google

soul which has been crushed under the weight of daily duty, has felt a spark of the great spirit, has felt an indefinable impulse, which is, in fact, the nascent love of nature and of out-of-door liberty. * * * Let us hear no more about the poets not being *practical* men: they are the most practical and promotive of public wealth and activity; they are your true political economists; your diffusers of the circulating medium; in fact, your ship-builders, house-builders; smiths, black, white, or copper; your tailors and clothiers; your very hosts, cads, waiters, and grooms—for, to all these, they give not merely employment, but life and being itself.

"And yet it is a curious fact, that the poets and the mechanics struck out into a newer and bolder line together; that this new growth and outburst of intellect and ideality—this *revival* in the world of mind—indicated its presence at once in the imaginative and the constructive crania. It is curious that steam, mechanism, and poetry, should have been brought simultaneously to bear in so extraordinary a degree on the public spirit and character. The love of poetry and nature, of picturesque scenery and summer wanderings, no sooner were generated by the means I have here stated, than lo, steamers appeared at the quays, and railroads projected their iron lines over hill and dale. Impulse was given at the same

Digitized by Google

moment to the public heart, and facility to yield to it. Had the one appeared without the other, there must have been felt a painful restraint, an uncomprehended but urgent want. Had the poetic spirit come alone, it would have lacked wings to fly to the mountains and the ocean-shores. Had the mechanic impetus arisen without this, it would have wanted employment for its full energies. Their advent was coincident; and their present effect is amazing, and their future one a matter of wild speculation and wonder."

After alluding to the preoccupation, by our departed bards, of the most favoured scenes and subjects in the Land, he observes:—"We cannot, indeed, say what genius may yet draw from material which still lies unseen or unregarded, for its power is boundless."

It has been with the hope of attracting some of the thousands of our summer tourists, that seek for health and recreation from the toils and anxieties of what may be termed, this too-busy and over-wrought world—to such historical sites and scenes of picturesque beauty, which, although hitherto not altogether unknown, have been too little regarded,—that the author of "SOMERSET, WITH THE SEVERN SEA," has ventured to lay the result of his wanderings before the public; without either seeking for favour or deprecating criticism, confident that if it have merit it will live; and if not, then—let it die.

Digitized by Google

But whatever may be its fate, it cannot deprive him of the memory of the past, of the pleasant hours employed in its composition, and of renewing the enjoyment he felt in rambling over those glorious hills and valleys; and although time has now blanched his brow, and he can no longer say, with the poet:—

"The elastic spring of an unwearied foot,
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence;
That play of lungs, inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Age hath not pilfer'd yet,—"

Still, he can join him in the concluding lines of his strain:—

"Nor yet impair'd
My relish of fair prospect; scenes that sooth'd
Or charm'd me young, no longer young, I find
Still soothing, and of power to charm me still."

COWPER.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

PART I.

EAST SOMERSET.

PAGE.

FIRST CANTO.—Bath, Early Morning—Lansdown, Battle-ground of the Royal and Parliamentary Forces—Kelweston House—Queen Elizabeth's Visit there—Victoria of England—Valley of the Avon—Bristowe and Clifton—Saint Mary's, Redcliff—Rowley—Chatterton—Sir T. Lawrence—Southey—Saint Vincent's Rocks and Leigh Woods—Confluence of the Avon and Severn—Portishead. 1

SECOND CANTO.—The Severn, with Historical Associations—Return of the Great Western Steam Ship from her First Voyage—View of the Monmouthshire Mountains, with Reminiscences—Ruins of Walton Castle—Clevedon—Coleridge—Clevedon Court, Elton—Brockley Hall and Coombe—Vale of Wrington—Birth-place of Locke—Barley-wood, Residence of Hannah More—Blagdon, Lang-horne—Cheddar Cliffs and Village 41

THIRD CANTO.—Worle Hill, "The Pass of St. Kew"—Ruins of Woodspring Priory—Anchor Head—Loss of a Vessel on the Wolves Rocks—The Flat and Steep Holms—Birnbeck—Drowning of the Brothers Elton—Weston Bay—Banwell Hill and Caves—Uphill Parsonage, the Poet Lisle Bowles—The River Axe—Burnham—The Moors—Sharpham Park, Fielding—Wyrall Hill—Planting of the Cross—The Holy Thorn—Glaston Abbey... 89

FOURTH CANTO.—City of Wells and its Cathedral—State of the English Peasantry—Cadbury Height—Alfred's Tower—Ruins of Nunney Castle—Eggford, Elizabeth Rowe—Vellis Vale—Remains of Farleigh Castle—Confluence of the Frome and Avon—Valley of the Avon—Vision of Bath, when occupied by the Romans—Sunset View of the Present City, &c. ... 148

Digitized by Google

PART II.

WEST SOMERSET.

PAGE.

FIRST CANTO.—Crewkerne—Churchyard—Grammar School, with Youth's Reminiscences—Hamden Hill—River Ivel, Ilchester, Friar Bacon—River Parret, Remains of Muchelney Abbey—Burton Pynsent, Chatham—Sedgmoor—Duke of Monmouth's Entry into Taunton—Advance to Bridgwater—Battle between the Rebels and the Royal Forces—Defeat and Flight of Monmouth 183

SECOND CANTO.—THE STORY OF ATHELNEY—Attack and dispersion of the Saxons by the Danes at Chippenham—King Alfred seeks a retreat in the Forest of Athelney—Finds an asylum in a Neatherd's Cottage—Receives tidings of a defeat of the Danes in Devonshire—Inspired with fresh hope, the King visits the Danish camp in the guise of a Harper—Returns to his retreat, reveals himself to his faithful Earls in the adjoining Counties, and summons them to meet him, with their Followers, in the Forest of Selwood—Alfred advances with his army, and obtains a signal victory over the Danes at Ethandune, which restores him to his throne, and confirms him sole Monarch of all England—Returns to Athelney, where some of his captives become converts to Christianity ... 243

THIRD CANTO.—The Quantock Hills—General View from their Summits—Nether-Stowey, Coleridge, &c.—Alfoxden, Wordsworth—Dunster Castle—Minehead—Luccombe—Holnicot—River Horner—Porlock Bay—Ashley Lodge—Culbourne—Exmoor—Winsford—Pixton Park—Confluence of the Exe and Barle 301

FOURTH CANTO.—Bleadon Hill; The Wellington Column—Vale of Taunton-Deane—Jordans; Speke, Discoverer of the Source of the Nile—Cricket Lodge; Admiral Viscount Bridport—St. Rane's Hill—Hinton House and Park—The Village; Early Reminiscences—Conclusion 363

Digitized by Google

SOMERSET.

FIRST CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SOMERSET.

FIRST CANTO.

BATH, EARLY MORNING — LANSDOWN, BATTLE-GROUND OF THE ROYAL AND PARLIAMENTARY FORCES — KELWESTON HOUSE — QUEEN ELIZABETH'S VISIT THERE — VICTORIA, OF ENGLAND — VALLEY OF THE AVON — BRISTOWE AND CLIFTON — SAINT MARY'S, REDCLIFF — ROWLEY — CHATTERTON — SIR T. LAWRENCE — SOUTHEY — SAINT VINCENT'S ROCKS AND LEIGH WOODS — CONFLUENCE OF THE AVON AND SEVERN — PORTISHEAD.

I.

FAIR rose the morn, upon a summer's day,
When, weary of the town, by Avon's stream
And willow-fringéd banks, we bent our way:—
On Claverton's dark brow the eastern beam
Crimson'd his crest of pine, and threw a gleam
Of glory o'er the palaces that stand [supreme,
On Lansdown's lofty side—where, thron'd
Above her peopled vale, on either hand,
The peerless City* sat, the loveliest of the land!

* See Warner's History of Bath.

Digitized by Google

II.

For Time, that mars the splendour of most things,
Hath not, Badonia! thrown his blight on thee;
But, like the god* that guards thy sacred springs,
Immortal as his beauty thine shall be:—
The Roman erst rul'd o'er thy destiny,
And left behind some relics and a name;—
Now, chosen seat of thousands, brave and free—
Sons of those sires that from the Saxon came,
The farthest bounds of earth re-echo to thy fame!

III.

And thou hast been the centre and resort
Of pleasure and of fashion—better days
Have brought to thee grave Science and fair Art,
With generous Charity, that ne'er decays:—
While Piety her willing offering pays
On altars Mammon hath profan'd of yore;
Shedding sweet incense round her pleasant ways,
Where Folly jingled her light bells before;
'Till Satire† from her brow the wreath fantastic tore.

* Apollo Medicus. † See Anstey's New Bath Guide.

Digitized by Google

IV.

And silence reigns throughout her lonely streets,
While mirth and music from her halls are fled;
Nor voice nor sound the early wanderer greets,
Save the faint echo of some warder's* tread;
Or night's rude reveller, that seeks his bed
At the fresh hour of prime;—while the pure air,
O'er park and crescent, tower and terrace spread,
Doth make the fair and beautiful more fair—
So clearly rise the hills, the proud homes resting there.

V.

And he who linger'd, for a space, to muse
On that fair scene, at morning's silent hour,
Now turn'd to trace his pathway through the dews
That hung on every blade, and leaf, and flower,
By the green river-side—'till Lansdown's tower
Rose on his sight, against the northern sky,
And pointed to the plain,[1] where tyrant Power
Met with bold Liberty, his strength to try—
And dust of friend and foe now undistinguish'd lie.

* *alias* Policeman.

Digitized by Google

VI.

It was a fierce and fatal fight—that day [blood,
Saw England's soil deep stain'd with England's
By British brothers shed.—In stern array,
On the hill's side, the host of Waller stood;
Then rush'd upon their foemen like a flood—
And like a flood receding, back they came;
Till gallant Grenville made his passage good,
And in the conflict fell—leaving his name
Upon that lofty height to live—his deeds to fame!

VII.

O fair Avona! from that field of strife,
From a brave Nation's wrongs and misery—
When, foremost there and prodigal of life,
She wept her proud yet fallen chivalry—
O fair Avona! let me turn to thee,—
Turn to thy tranquil vale and meadows green,
Where onward to the main, and winding free,
Thou flowest quietly thy banks between,
As though upon their steep stern war had never been.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

Far happier days, when Albion's virgin Queen[2]
On bold Kelweston's wood-encircled brow
Sat silent, gazing on that lovely scene,—
Which smiled in beauty then, as fair as now—
And listening to the gentle river's flow :—
Or, when at eve those halls with music rung, [glow,
Mid Mirth's young wiles, and Pleasure's genial
Mute o'er her minstrel host* attentive hung,
As soft he pour'd the lay that Ariosto sung.

IX.

And days as great and glorious still are thine,
Proud England ! when, to grace thy regal throne,
Mercy and majesty with love combine,
In one who makes all people's hearts her own ;
Circling her diadem, as with a zone,
In public peril, or in private bower ;
O Queen of boundless realms ! thy gentlest tone
Would nerve bold Freedom's arm in danger's hour,
To awe a despot's frown, or quell a tyrant's power.

* Sir John Harrington, who translated the Orlando Furioso.

Digitized by Google

X.

Now roseate Morn her misty veil had drawn
From the glad earth, and usher'd in young Day;
Throwing his bright robe over hill and lawn,
Where the dun herd still ruminating lay,
Or graz'd the dewy grass—and green slopes, gay
With laughing flow'rs, uprose on either side,
Or threw their bosky shadows o'er our way;
While the slow barge, at times, was seen to glide,
As glanc'd her shifting sail along the silent tide.

XI.

Ansonia may boast of brighter skies,
Of loftier mountains, and of seas more blue;
Her glorious sun-sets of a thousand dies,
Her flowers of finer scent and deeper hue;
Nor more, Italia! than may be thy due:—
Yet hither come, but come when summer's nigh,
When fields are fairest, and when clouds are few—
And yet enough to vary earth and sky— [vie.[3]
Then own sweet Avon's vale, with Arno's still may

Digitized by Google

XII.

Now peer'd Bristowa darkly on the sight,
Envelop'd deep within her murky shroud;
Save where, on old St. Michael's lofty height,
She lifts her head above that stygian cloud:—
While sounds of labour, many-voic'd and loud,
Came on the breeze, and fill'd the musing mind
With far-off thoughts, and recollections proud
Of peaceful Commerce, and those Arts that bind
In one unbounded chain, the links of human kind.

XIII.

Onward we pass'd—nor weary seem'd the way—
Yet pass'd not then that ancient City through—
'Till by our path Ashton's green valley lay,
And Leigh's bold woods before us gradual grew;—
Then rose fair Clifton on our wondering view,
Where palace-homes of princely merchants stand;
Lifting their heads 'gainst heaven's etherial blue,
As though uprais'd by some enchanter's wand,
So proudly look'd they down o'er half the lovely land.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

O matchless scene of beauty and repose!
Where noble Art and glorious Nature meet;
As if, in rivalry, that spot they chose,
To form Wealth's most magnificent retreat:—
A thousand barks are lying at her feet,
With flags of nations waving in their pride;
Some with loud cheer their gallant comrades greet,
And some are waiting for the welcome tide,
While others with the flood majestically glide.

XV.

And they who chance, in musing mood, to be
Among the groups that gather on that strand,—
When some proud ship is entering from the sea,
Or, haply, leaving for a distant land,—
May mark those anxious gazers, as they stand,
Their welcome or their parting words to tell;
As lip to lip is prest, and hand to hand,
Responsive to each throbbing bosom's swell;
While spreads the joyful cheer, or dies the last farewell.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

Ye who from distant climes are led, to roam [shed;
Where Learning and fair Art their light have
And ye, the muses' sons, who hither come,
The poet's, painter's, classic ground to tread;
Pause, ere you pass the unforgotten dead,
Whose memory throws a halo o'er each scene,
And consecrated spot around us spread;
While Glory plants her laurel, ever green,
To flourish where the birth of Genius hath been.

XVII.

Then turn—and lo! on Redcliffe's peopled hill,[4]
Where stately stands St. Mary's ancient tower,
The boy-bard lived—oft wandering at his will
Amid these meadows lone at evening hour,
To catch a gleam of inspiration's power;
Ambitious of the meed that doth belong—
The minstrel's well-strung harp his only dower—
To time-enduring verse—to stand among
The bright immortal train, who build the lofty song.

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

I would not pluck a flower that Fame hath strown
O'er thy untimely, unbefriended bier;[5]
But let him wear who wins the laurel-crown.—
Be thine, though bigots frown, the generous tear
That falls for life so lost, and hopes all sere.
The world will have its victims—scorn and pride,
Neglect and penury—with none to cheer
The struggling spirit through affliction's tide—
Still fill the cup of those who thus have liv'd and died.

XIX.

Far happier thou, Bristowa's favoured son,*
Whose graceful pencil, with a skill divine,
Fame for thyself and for thy country won:
With rarest beauty in thy works combine
Nature's own tints with truth's unerring line,
Till mortal forms immortal soon became:—
Yet, Lawrence! nobler still, the gift was thine,
That in thy breast arose the purer flame,
Which spreads, by generous deeds, a halo round thy name.

* Sir T. Lawrence—see his Memoir.

Digitized by Google

XX.

And he,* within those walls first saw the light,
The bard, upon whose birth th' auspicious star
Of genius shone—who sang Don Roderick's might;
And told the famous story of that war,
When Wellesley check'd the conqueror's fiery car,
Upon the fields of Spain: by Keswick's lake
His chosen home he made, while near and far
His song the mountain echoes oft would wake—
And there the pilgrim goes, and ponders, for his sake.

XXI.

The signal sounds—aboard the trim boat now,
Impatient of delay, the crowd repair;
Some in rude haste are gathering at the prow,
While those the after-deck are led to share,
And mingle with the gay and gallant there:
And midst them one, who stands apart—unknown,[6]
Whose brow a deeper shade of thought might wear,
As though he caught a feeling and a tone
From the sublime around, and wish'd to be alone.

* Southey.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

For he had been a lover from his youth
Of nature—whatsoe'er her scenes inspire,
To him was full of beauty and of truth;
And he the pencil courted, and the lyre,
Might he but touch them with a master's fire:—
But weak his hand such features to pourtray.—
Would that the power but equall'd his desire
To bid them live in some enduring lay;
And all they give of joy, with glory to repay!

XXIII.

The tide is up—and spreading to its brim
The still, smooth river as a lake doth lie;
Upon whose breast fair swans are seen to swim
Amid the shadows of the land and sky:—
So gently glides the stately vessel by,
A double image on the glassy stream;
Where, pictured in its depths, you may descry
Such beauteous scenes, that fancy well might deem
It some bright world below,—so like to earth's they seem.

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

Then rose precipitous those rocks of eld, [name;
That from Valentia's Saint* have ta'en their
Whose silent cave a pious hermit held,
When holy men, to nurse religion's flame,
To lonely woods and lofty mountains came:—
And sooth an eremite no fitter cell
Could find, his faith to fix or sins to tame;
To break ambition, lust, or pleasure's spell—
And for such peaceful life to bid the world farewell.

XXV.

Who hath not felt, mid Nature's scenes sublime,
How impotent is language to express,
Or image forth, the forms that mock at Time,
Whose sweeping scythe all else destroys—nor less
Proud man, before them feels his nothingness:
Thrones, empires, generations pass away,
With those who bless us, or whom we may bless;
But ye, eternal heights! lone, stern, and gray,
Stand, as ye ever stood, triumphant o'er decay!

* St. Vincent, the patron saint of Valentia.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

O glorious beauty, proud primeval woods,*
That clothe with sylvanry yon adverse steep;[7]
Still sacred be your leafy solitudes,
Where silence doth her lonely vigils keep;
Save when the jocund echoes wake, and leap
From rock to rock, light laughter to prolong;
Or o'er your glens still evening's shadows creep,
Then tuneful voices breathe those bowers among,
While lingering lovers pause to hear congenial song.

XXVII.

Anon the harp is struck,† some melody,
Or new, or old, doth cheer us as we go;
And things of loveliness, like those we see,
Might wean awhile the bosom from its woe.
Rock, wood, and wave, are swiftly pass'd—and lo!
Gordano's valley now before me lies:
Sunshine and shadow quickly come and go,
As fly the light clouds o'er the summer skies,
While Clevedon's distant hills in soften'd beauty rise.

* Leigh Woods.

† It is usual for these boats to have musicians on board.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

The scene is chang'd—and deeper, wider flows
The full majestic river—on we glide
Between low banks, where spreading plains repose;—
And now we feel the heaving of the tide,
And bounding forward, on its billows ride:
Then fresher came the breeze upon our brow,
And Cambria's mountains* rose in azure pride;
O glorious was the view that opened now,
As gaily o'er the waves advanced our conquering prow!

XXIX.

Here swiftly confluent, embracing meet
Avona and Sabrina, sisters twain;
Where, safe embay'd,† Bristowa's freighted fleet
A fair wind waits, to waft it to the main:
And now a wider offing straight we gain—
"Starboard the helm," the master cheerly cries,
As stands attentively his ready train—
"Starboard it is," the helmsman quick replies,
And round the long low point th' obedient vessel flies:

* The Monmouthshire hills. † The anchorage of Kingroad.

Digitized by Google

XXX.

Then bent her steady course across the bay,
That spread its verdant marge beside the flood;
While far beyond moorland and meadow lay,
And Portishead's bold promontory stood
Full in our front, and crown'd with waving wood.[8]
Her anchor dropp'd, a boat comes from the strand,
While some in musing, some in merry mood,
With snatch of song or glee—a medley band—
Keep cadence with the oar, until we reach the land.

XXXI.

A sweet and sylvan spot, as ever rose
Above the rough verge of the restless sea;
While round its rocky base the deep tide flows,
With ever-varying voice, unceasingly:—
And there doth stand a welcome hostelry,
Within the shadow of its woody hill;
Where seldom sound the tones of revelry,
But all is bowery, and cool, and still,
While ramblers there may rest, or wander at their will.

Digitized by Google

XXXII.

And from the summit of that leafy mount
What glorious scenes the raptur'd eye may view!
O for a pen from inspiration's fount
To paint them—still the same, yet ever new;
Gathering their tone and colour from the hue
Of changing seasons, of the clouds and sky;
The rise and set of suns, and drought and dew;
The sea-bird's flight, the white sail passing by,
With all the lovely things upon the earth that lie.

XXXIII.

Form they the burthen of another fytte,
Another ramble by old Hafren's* side:—
Here mid cool fragrance let us musing sit—
From garish day how sweet awhile to hide,
Sooth'd by the murmur of the sleepless tide.
Boy! bring the citron'd bowl and mild cigar,
While we the sun's declining hours abide,
With song to cheer us; till bright Cynthia's car,
Above the eastern hills, Night's dusky gates unbar.

* The British or Celtic name of the Severn.

Digitized by Google

XXXIV.

Now spreads the moon's soft radiance o'er the wave—
And hark! the songster[9] of still listening Night,
Who sits entranc'd within her silent cave,
Pours his deep melody of lone delight;
No longer lonely—with superior might,
A rival minstrel mocks his varied lay;—
So many a bard doth try a lofty flight,
To win a wreath from Fame's immortal bay,
Until some mightier come to bear the palm away.

XXXV.

Enough for me, if mid these beauteous scenes,
Led by my verse, the stranger oft may rove;
And o'er this rude rock as he musing leans,
Or sits beneath the bow'r these trees have wove,
He dwell upon my page with partial love.
To loftier lyres heroic lays belong,
Or tragic strain the heart's deep springs to move;
Content be mine, despite the critic throng,
If those whom Nature charms but listen to my song.

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO FIRST CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 3.

And pointed to the plain where tyrant Power
Met with bold Liberty, his strength to try—

Upon this hill was fought in 1643 the memorable Battle of Lansdown, between the royal and parliamentary forces; thus described by Clarendon.

"It was upon the fifth of July, when Sir William Waller, as soon as it was light, possessed himself of that hill; and after he had, upon the brow of the hill over the highway, raised breast-works with faggots and earth, and planted cannon there, he sent a strong party of horse towards Marshfield; which quickly alarmed the other army, and was shortly driven back to their body. As great a mind as the king's forces had to cope with the enemy,—when they had drawn into battalia, and found them fixed on the top of the hill, they resolved not to attack them upon so great disadvantage; and so retired again towards their old quarters: which Sir William Waller perceiving, sent his whole body of horse and dragoons down the hill to charge the rear and flank of the king's forces; which they did thoroughly, the regiment of Cuirassiers so amazing the horse they charged, that they totally routed them; and, standing firm and unshaken themselves, gave so great terror to the king's horse,—

Digitized by Google

who had never before turned from an enemy, that no example of their officers, who did their parts with invincible courage, could make them charge with the same confidence, and in the same manner they had usually done. However in the end, after Sir Nicholas Slanning with three hundred musketeers, had fallen upon and beaten their reserve of dragoons, Prince Maurice and the Earl of Carnarvon, rallying their horse, and winging them with the Cornish musketeers, charged the enemy's horse again and totally routed them; and in the same manner received two bodies more, and routed and chased them to the hill, where they stood in a place almost inaccessible. On the brow of the hill there were breast-works, on which were pretty bodies of small shot, and some cannon; on either flank grew a pretty thick wood towards the declining of the hill, in which strong parties of musquiteers were placed; at the rear was a very fair plain, where the reserves of horse and foot stood ranged; yet the Cornish foot were so far from being appalled at this disadvantage, that they desired to fall on, and cried out, 'that they might have leave to fetch off those cannon.' In the end, order was given to attempt the hill with horse and foot. Two strong parties of musquiteers were sent into the woods, which flanked the enemy, and the horse and other musquiteers up the road-way, which were charged by the enemy's horse, and routed; then Sir Beville Grenville advanced with a party of horse, on his right hand, that ground being best for them; and his musketeers on the left, himself leading up his pikes in the middle; and in the face of their cannon, and small shot from the breast-works, gained the brow of the hill, having sustained two full charges of the enemy's horse; but in the third charge, his horse failing, and giving ground, he received, after other wounds, a blow on the head with a poll-axe, with which he fell, and many of his officers about him; yet the musquiteers fired so fast upon the enemy's horse, that they quitted their ground, and the two wings that were sent to clear the woods, having done their work, and gained those parts of

Digitized by Google

the hill, at the same time beat off the enemy's foot, and became possessed of the breast-works; and so made way for their whole body of horse, foot, and cannon, to ascend the hill; which they quickly did, and planted themselves on the ground they had won; the enemy retiring about demy-culverin shot behind a stone wall upon the same level, and standing in reasonable good order.

"Either party was sufficiently tired and battered, to be contented to stand still. The king's horse were so shaken, that of two thousand that were upon the field in the morning, there were not above six hundred on the top of the hill. The enemy was exceedingly scattered too, and had no mind to venture on plain ground with those who had beaten them from the hill; so that, exchanging only some shot from their ordnance, they looked one upon another till the night interposed. About twelve of the clock, it being very dark, the enemy made a show of moving towards the ground they had lost, but giving a smart volley of small-shot, and finding themselves answered with the like, they made no more noise; which the prince observing, he sent a common soldier to hearken as near the place where they were as he could, who brought word 'that the enemy had left lighted matches in the wall behind which they had lain, and were drawn off the field;' which was true; so that, as soon as it was day, the king's army found themselves possessed entirely of the field, and the dead, and all other ensigns of victory. Sir William Waller being marched to Bath, in so much disorder and apprehension, that he left great store of arms, and ten barrels of powder behind him; which was a very seasonable supply to the other side, who had spent in that day's service, no less than fourscore barrels, and had not a safe proportion left.

"In this battle, on the king's part, there were more officers and gentlemen of quality slain, than common men; and more hurt than slain. That which would have clouded any victory, and made the loss of others less spoken of, was the death of Sir Bevil Grenville. He was indeed an excellent person, whose

Digitized by Google

activity, interest, and reputation, was the foundation of what had been done in Cornwall; and his temper and affections so publick, that no accident which happened, could make any impression in him; and his example kept others from taking any thing ill, or, at least, seeming to do so. In a word, a brighter courage, and a gentler disposition, were never married together, to make the most cheerful and innocent conversation."

On the northern ridge of the down—the very spot so hardly contested—stands a monument, with the above quotation, from Lord Clarendon's history of the rebellion, on its south tablet. On the west side are trophies of war; and on the east the Royal Arms and those of Grenville. The following lines are inscribed on the north tablet.

"When now the incensed rebels proudly came
Down like a torrent, without bank or dam,
When undeserv'd success urg'd on their force,
That thunder must come down to stop their course,
Or Grenville must step in; there Grenville stood,
And with himself oppos'd and check'd the flood.
Conquest or death was all his thought, so fire
Either o'ercomes or does itself expire.
His courage work'd like flame, cast heat about,
Here, there—on this and that side none gave out,
Not any pike in that renowned stand,
But took new force from his inspiring hand;
Soldier encourag'd soldier, man urg'd man,
And he urg'd all—so far example can.
Hurt upon hurt, wound upon wound did call,
He was the butt, the mark, the aim of all.
His soul this while retir'd from cell to cell,
At last flew up from all—and then he fell!
But the devoted band—enrag'd the more
From that his fate—plied hotter than before,
And proud to fall with him, swore not to yield,
Each sought an honour'd grave, and gain'd the field.

Digitized by Google

Thus he being fall'n, his actions fought anew,
And the dead conquer'd, whilst the living flew."

W. CARTWRIGHT, 1643.

"Thus slain, thy valiant ancestor did lie,
When his own bark a navy did defy:
When now encompass'd round he victor stood,
And bath'd his pinnace in his conquering blood,
Till all his purple current dry'd and spent,
He fell, and made the waves his monument.
Where shall the next fam'd Grenville's ashes stand?
Thy grandsire fills the seas, and thou the land."

MARTIN LLEWELLIN.

"To the immortal memory of his renowned and his valiant Cornish friends, who conquered dying in the royal cause, July 5th, 1643, this column was dedicated by the Honourable George Grenville Lord Lansdowne 1720. Dulce est pro patria mori."

It is a very delightful ride or drive from Bath, over Lansdown, to this spot; and which may be continued through Kelweston in returning. The view westward from the brow of the hill, near the monument, were there no other interest, is well worth a visit thither, for its own sake. It is wonderfully fine —not merely for its extent, but also for its great interest and beauty.

NOTE II. PAGE 5.

Far happier days, when Albion's virgin Queen
On bold Kelweston's wood-encircled brow

"Kelweston, anciently written Kelveston, and pronounced Kelston, is a small parish, situate in the upper turnpike road

Digitized by Google

from Bath to Bristol, by the way of Kingswood. The scenery is as pleasing and as beautiful as can well be conceived. The road, cut along a gently-waving terrace, and intersecting, by means of a small bridge, the meandering Avon, is uncommonly pleasant, and commands, on both sides, a very rich prospect.

"The old manor-house of Kelweston was built in the year 1587, by Sir John Harrington, Bart., after a design of Barozzio, of Vignola, an Italian architect of the sixteenth century. Of this building the court-yard only remains.

"Sir John Harrington, of Kelweston, is principally known as the translator of the celebrated Orlando Furioso, of Ludovico Ariosto, which he published before he had attained his thirtieth year. He was born about the year 1561, at the family-seat in Kelston, and had for his godmother no less a personage than Queen Elizabeth, who did his parents this honour from motives of gratitude for the services they had rendered her before she ascended the throne, and during her confinement in the reign of Mary. He was educated at Eton, and afterwards entered at Cambridge, under the tuition of Bishop Still, whose attention made so deep an impression on him, that the remembrance of it never faded from his mind; and he himself says, that he never went to him but he grew more religious, and never parted with him but with additional instruction. Under so admirable a tutor, and with the advantages of great natural talents, Harrington soon became conspicuous for his literature and wit; qualifications that increased the regard which Elizabeth already entertained for her godson. He now went to court, where he quickly rendered himself remarkable, not only by his good-natured satire and sprightly epigrams, but also by a translation of the tale of Alcina and Rogero, from the Orlando Furioso. This performance circulating among the ladies of the bed-chamber, at length reached the eye of the virgin-queen, who, feigning herself offended at the licentiousness of the story, imposed upon Harrington the translation of the *whole* poem, as an expiation of the crime against offended

Digitized by Google

modesty. To work, therefore, he went, and produced Ariosto in English, to the great satisfaction of the queen, who received him again into favour, and permitted his return to court, from whence he had been banished till the translation should be completed.

"In 1599 Harrington was made a knight-banneret in the field, by Essex, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, for the valour he displayed in that country. The disgust which the queen conceived both against him and Essex on account of this honour being conferred without her privity, induced him probably to withdraw from court, and retire to Kelweston." He was a true poet in all things but poverty; for he died wealthy, and left a fair estate to his son."—*Magna Britannia, IV.* 793, 794.

"One of the most singular honours conferred on Sir John, was the visit which his royal godmother paid to him at Kelweston, in the year 1591, where she was gratified with all the delicacies of the times; and, what was much more to the taste of Elizabeth, with a profusion of complimentary verses and poetical conceits, the productions of the pen of her witty host. It was upon this occasion that she made her godson a present of a splendid golden font, which was preserved in the family till 1643, when being removed from Kelweston to Bristol, for greater security, it fell, with that city, into the hands of the parliament-forces, and was heard of no more. The old mansion suffered repeatedly during the civil wars, being alternately plundered by the royalists or parliamentarians, as often as their forces passed that way; but its venerable head still continued to brave the storms of fortune, and the changes and chances of human affairs, till modern taste laid its destructive hand upon the fabric, and in the rage of improvement levelled its turrets with the dust."—*Historical Account of Bath.*

"The present manor-house was built by Sir Cæsar Hawkins. It is an elegant structure, finely situated on a rising ground, a little south of the site of the old mansion, and commands a rich and variegated prospect."—*Top. and His. Des. of the Co. of Som.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE III. Page 6.

Then own sweet Avon's vale, with Arno's still may vie.

We have not had the advantage of viewing the celebrated vale of Arno for ourselves, but have alluded to it here in the way of comparison with that of the Avon, on the faith of poets and travellers, by whom it has been lauded in all times. But, from the following passage which has fallen under our notice since writing the above line, we feel that we have not been too presumptious in comparing the beautiful course of our own, with that of the far-famed Florentine river.

Sir David Wilkie observes, in one of his letters—"Our route from Leghorn passed along the banks of the Arno, a name which one associates with every thing poetical; but how it falls short of this! it is now half dried up, with scarcely a current of green muddy water. On its banks are the pine, the grape, and the olive, but all stunted shrubs. A full-grown tree, like those in Hyde Park, is not to be seen in the whole line of the river. The houses, therefore, have no shelter, nor are they variegated to the eye by foliage and vegetation; and even the verdure of green fields, rich as the country is in other products, is here unknown. The sky is also different from ours: it is of a clearer blue, and for weeks we see it without a cloud; which, fine as it first appears, is tiresome, and presents not half the interest and beauty to the eye that one finds in the unsettled, showery, and muddy skies of England."

Wilkie is right—and speaks with the eye and feeling of a true painter, in comparing the skies of Italy with those of our northern clime. However beautiful may be the unveiled azure of the former for a few days, its more general prevalence must pall on the sight, and cannot possess half the grandeur and variety of effect which distinguish those of our own perpetually changing atmosphere.

With regard to the superiority of the Italian or English vale,

Digitized by Google

we are not of ourselves qualified to decide; but the scenery of the banks of the Avon from its entrance into the county of Somerset to its confluence with the Severn—a distance of twenty miles—may not, we imagine, be easily surpassed.

NOTE IV. Page 9.

Then turn—and lo! on Redcliffe's peopled hill,
Where stately stands St. Mary's ancient tower,

"The first ecclesiastical structure erected on or near the site of the present church, was a chapel dedicated to St. Mary, built in the reign of Henry III. This being found too small for the increase of the inhabitants in that quarter, a second church is attributed as having been commenced in 1292, by Simon de Burton, who was five times mayor of Bristol, and who founded the almshouses in Long Row, under which he is buried. The body of the church, from the cross aisle downwards, is said by some authors to have been completed in 1367, by William Canynges, who was five times mayor of Bristol. How far we may give credence to the account given in our annals of the violent tempest that is said to have so materially damaged the building in 1466, must remain a matter of opinion. It is stated that the nave and south aisles were entirely destroyed by the spire being precipitated upon them; it appears, however, to be doubtful whether the spire, if intended, was ever completed; as it would certainly have lessened the massive and imposing majesty of the tower; the accounts respecting its restoration are also involved in great obscurity, all that can be satisfactorily ascertained from documentary evidence, merely proving it to have been the work of the renowned William Canynges, grandson of the Canynges who completed it, and who, by rebuilding it in its present form, has

Digitized by Google

left posterity indebted to him for the stupendous fabric that rivets the attention of every beholder.

"The oldest portion of the building is the middle north porch, remarkable for its singularity of construction; the style prevailed in Normandy about the period of its erection, but in England it has scarcely a parellel. The tower and grand north porch are of a more rich and elaborate character, and may be referred to William Canynges, senior, in the reign of Edward III. The remainder of the edifice, consisting of the nave, choir, and transepts, is acknowledged as the work of William Canynges, whose name is associated with the extraordinary compositions of the hapless Chatterton."

"Situated on the brow of a natural terrace, denominated, from its elevation above the Avon, and from the colour of its soil, the Red-Cliff, this church assumes a lofty and imposing aspect; and in its symmetry of design, in its harmony and unity of character, in the picturesque combination of its various parts, is surpassed by none of the ecclesiastical buildings in England. Is is therefore to be lamented that a conspicuous freestone monument* to the memory of the unfortunate Chatterton should have been placed immediately beside the tower, in a situation so injudicious as entirely to destroy the grand effect of the whole edifice, which on the north side is so particularly striking. The ill-fated boy required neither graven image, nor brazen record to blazon forth his name—the hallowed structure was his monument—he was indissolubly united with every portion of the mighty pile, by a magic tie that neither man nor time can rend asunder—it belongs unto the realm of thought as identified with his existence, with the antique garb of his wondrous minstrelsy—with the tale of his sufferings and crime; and the pilgrim, and the stranger, when they behold from afar its magnificent tower rising to the skies, will ever regard it as his gorgeous cenotaph.

* * * * * *

* It is now removed.

Digitized by Google

"After the lapse of four centuries, the private worth and public services of this estimable man, William Canynges, still command a place in our grateful memories; while the researches of antiquaries have penetrated through the dark shadow of the wings of time, and gleaned from documentary evidence much that is locally interesting connected with his private history. The facts that have been collected respecting him, although limited, can only be generally alluded to in the compass of this work. At the zenith of his prosperity he possessed the highest rank in point of wealth and civic importance. * *

* * * * * *

In 1466, as soon as he had discharged his office of mayor, he took the order of priesthood, and sung his first mass on Whitsunday, in the Lady Chapel, at Redcliff. It is also stated that the premature death of his two sons induced him to abandon the cares of a busy and mercantile life, and seek consolation in retirement and devotion, by dedicating the remainder of his days to the service of God. He passed the last six years of his life as Dean of the College of Westbury; dying early in the year 1475, aged 74. A large concourse of ecclesiastics, particularly of the mendicant orders, to whom he had bequeathed legacies of an amount very unusual in those days, accompanied his funeral to the place of sepulture in Redcliff Church.

* * * * * *

"Over the north porch is the apartment formerly known as the muniment-room, in which were kept the archives belonging to the church. It was about the year 1729 that the notion prevailed that title-deeds and other ancient documents were enclosed in Canynges' coffer, with other chests deposited here, when an examination took place, and those that appeared of value were removed to the vestry-room. The eventful history of the muniment-room, as associated with the writings of the unfortunate Chatterton, is too well known to require insertion in these pages. The room forms an irregular octagon, admitting

Digitized by Google

light through narrow unglazed apertures upon the broken and scattered fragments of the famous Rowleian chests that, with the rubble and dust of centuries, cover the floor. In melancholy cadence the cannying wind creeps through the unprotected openings, and spreads its plaintive murmuring wail over the wreck of years. It is here creative fancy pictures forth the sad image of the spirit of the spot, the ardent boy, flushed and fed by hope, musing on the brilliant deception he had conceived, whose daring attempt has left his name unto the intellectual world as a marvel and a mystery. Here, in the full but fragile enjoyment of his brief and illusory existence, he stored the treasure-house of his memory with the thoughts that, teeming over his pages, have enrolled his name amongst the great in the land of poetry and song. Happy then, ere his first and joyous aspirations were repressed—ere the warm and genial emotions of his heart were checked—before time had dissipated his idle dreams, and neglect, contempt, and distress, had fastened on his mind, and hurried him onward to his untoward destiny. Then as the daily chimes poured from the lofty tower, and recalled his thoughts that roamed far, far away to a distant age, with long-hidden tales of romance and chivalry, and antique minstrelsy, to the ties of affection that formed a portion of his better nature—to the domestic hearth where his heart's social, kindliest feelings were enshrined—little did he then deem that the hour would come, when, in the utter desolation of his soul, apart from all human sympathy, alone in his deep interminable pride; his disappointed ambition would render him reckless of all worldly hopes, and unmindful of all heavenly commands. Little did he deem that the native energy of his genius would combat in vain the tide of difficulties that flowed against him; that penury and want, the misery of human days, that made his mortal life a wearying disease, would poison the springs of his existence; that in the dearth of his crushed feelings, friendless, hopeless, fearless, he would dare break the frail bonds of fleeting life, and rush unsummoned before the

Digitized by Google

throne of an Almighty power. The fame for which he longed, the glory that he thirsted for, he has attained; and though no marble decks the mound where lies his undistinguished dust; though for him no prayers from man, read over his grave, appealed in charity and mercy to an offended heaven; we may surely hope that in the abundance of that heaven's mercy there dwell pity and compassion for his suffering, forgiveness for his errors and his sins; that, purified from all earthly taint, exalted amidst the righteous and the just, his torn and restless spirit reposes in the mansions of the blest."

* * * * * *

Cursory Observations on the Churches of Bristol, by an occasional Visitor.—2nd Edition, 1843.

NOTE V. Page 10.

I would not pluck a flower that Fame hath strown
O'er thy untimely, unbefriended bier—

It would be impossible to enter fully into any thing like argument on this much debated subject, upon which so many able and learned men have disagreed, within the narrow compass of a note. The author of this little work, therefore, would only briefly allude to one simple fact, namely, that the poems of Rowley were discovered, and made known by Chatterton, *before* he wrote those published avowedly in his own name. Is it then credible that any one should produce his finest works, works so immeasurably superior as those of Rowley during the term of absolute boyhood, and others so greatly inferior that they will bear no comparison for a moment some years *after*, when, in the general course of nature and experience, his powers would attain to greater maturity?

Digitized by Google

Hear what Joseph Cottle says—a professed advocate on the side of Chatterton. "There is talent clearly evidenced in the prose and verse of Chatterton, notwithstanding the extreme haste with which the whole was written; but his reputation rests exclusively on Rowley, the deliberate effusion of his genius. None of his *other* writings, it must be admitted, possess the principles of vitality."

"The more the reader becomes acquainted with the authorities from which the notices in the present work are drawn, the more will he be convinced that Chatterton went through a parallel course of reading. Granting, which we do, most readily, that he took unwarrantable liberties with the MSS. that fell in his way, it is inconceivable that any powers of imagination could help him to names and places, the existence of which we have identified from sources that had lain hidden since a much earlier period than his birth, and till long after his death."

Note in Chronological Outline of the Hist. of Bristol.

The following is a quotation from Dix's Life of Chatterton.

"'Come,' he would say, 'you and I will take a walk in the meadows. I have got the cleverest thing for you that ever was; it is worth half a crown merely to have a sight of it, and to hear me read it to you.' When we were arrived at the place proposed, he would produce his parchment, shew it and read it to me. There was one spot in particular, full in view of the church, in which he always seemed to take a peculiar delight. He would frequently lay himself down, fix his eyes upon the church, and seem as if he were in a kind of ecstasy or trance. Then, on a sudden and abruptly, he would tell me, that steeple was burnt down by lightning; that was the place where they formerly acted plays; (meaning, if I remember right, what is now called the Parade;) I recollect very assuredly that he had a parchment in his hand at the very time he gave me this description, but whether he read this history out of that parchment, I am not certain."—*Dix's Life of Chatterton.*

The author of the present little work, when conversing, some

Digitized by Google

years since, with the late Rev. John Eagles—no bad judge of such subjects—on the matter of those writings, the latter observed to him "*You* do not believe that Chatterton was the author of Rowley's poems?" "No, I do not."—"Neither do I," was his reply.

NOTE VI. Page 11.

And there is one, who stands apart—unknown,

"On the other side of the deck stood a group of young men, who, by their careless and rather shabby dress, but pale and intellectual faces, were of that class met in every public conveyance of Italy.—The portfolios under their arms, ready for a sketch, would have removed a doubt of their profession, had one existed; and with that proud independence for which the class is remarkable, they had separated themselves equally from the noble and ignoble—disqualified by inward superiority from association with the one, and by accidental poverty from the claims cultivation might give them upon the other."

Willis's Inklings of Adventure.

It is strongly suspected, that the eccentric Individual alluded to by the author in the above line, from his text, must have been one of the fraternity so graphically and truly described in the paragraph just quoted.

NOTE VII. Page 14.

O glorious beauty, proud primeval woods,
That clothe with sylvanry yon adverse steep;

Leigh Woods—what memories and associations do they recall. Chatterton, Southey, Coleridge, C. A. Elton, and J. Eagles, with

Digitized by Google

other congenial spirits, have wandered and mused amid their song-inspiring shades; the very land of poetry and enchantment. Coleridge had evidently this scene in his mind's eye when writing the following passage from his beautiful "Monody on the Death of Chatterton."

"Ye woods that wave o'er Avon's rocky steep,
To Fancy's ear sweet is your murmuring deep!
For here she loves the cypress-wreath to weave,
Watching with wistful eye the saddening tints of eve.
Here, far from men, amid this pathless grove,
In solemn thought, the minstrel wont to rove,
Like star-beam on the slow sequestered tide,
Lone glittering through the high tree branching wide.
And here, in inspiration's eager hour,
When most the big soul feels the mastering power,
These wilds, these caverns roaming o'er,
Round which the screaming sea-gulls soar,
With wild unequal steps he pass'd along,
Oft pouring on the winds a broken song;
Anon, upon some rough rocks' fearful brow,
Would pause abrupt—and gaze upon the waves below."

Crossing Rownham Ferry—from the ascent leading to these romantic woods, a magnificent retrospective scene presents itself, of no common interest. Bristowe's broad city, the great mart of the West, sits before you in a valley darkly-canopied with smoke; through which, veiled but not hidden, the large and massive Cathedral, or College as it is called, in the centre, first fixes your attention—then the beautiful and matchless church of St. Mary on the red-cliff attracts the eye—and then the other lofty towers and spires rising in fine relief, and contrasting well with the dark and far-spreading masses of buildings beneath them. On the right extend the hills of Dundry, and on the left the crescented heights of Clifton,—the middle distance being occupied by floating docks and basins, on whose

Digitized by Google

bosom a thousand vessels may securely repose. In the immediate fore-ground rise the bold and precipitous rocks, on whose lofty summit stand the splendid homes of the wealthy; while some tall ship "from either Ind" floats up upon the tide, full thirty fathom below! the whole thrown off and relieved by a screen of dark foliage on one side, and a bold steep bank on the other. Such a combination of grand and beautiful objects, forming so perfect and splendid a picture, is seldom met with, and still more rarely surpassed.

About a mile from hence is the principal entrance to the grounds which lead to the park and mansion of Leigh Court; wherein—if the graces of painting allure the stranger—ample gratification may be found, in one of the finest collections of pictures in the kingdom. But this, like most other gratifications, is not without its alloy; at least, judging from our own feelings. A hasty glance over a large assemblage of Art, is insufficient and unsatisfactory; and few, except residents in the immediate neighbourhood, have time or opportunity for more. We visited it some years since, and on quitting that splendid abode with half-bewildered brain and a thousand images floating confusedly before us—fancied we were walking by the banks of an Italian river, with the cascade of Tivoli thundering in our ears—(it was a picture by Gaspar Poussin we had been last looking at)—when a stag at full speed suddenly crossed our path and startled us from our reverie. And lo! we were still in Leigh Park—the sunny light playing through the green glades, the brown oaks talking to the breeze—that came cool and refreshing to our brow—the pheasant on the wing, and the birds in full song; while a gentle shower that had just fallen, had gemmed every bough and blade with sparkling beauty. We felt the influence of the moment. The magnificent mansion, with the yet more magnificent things it contained, passed from our memory like a dream; and we would have there raised an altar to Nature, and, worshipping, acknowledged her supremacy. Art is but her hand-maid, to introduce her favoured

Digitized by Google

votaries into the innermost sanctuary of her glorious temple, and draw aside the veil that conceals her mysteries from vulgar eyes.*

The effect of this splendid scenery on the mind of an eloquent and celebrated man, the late Rev. Robert Hall, occurs in Mr. Cottle's "Recollections of S. T. Coleridge."

"During Mr. Hall's last visit to Bristol, (prior to his final settlement there) I conducted him to view the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood (as I had previously done, on each of his occasional visits to that city), and no one could be more alive to the picturesque than Mr. H.. On former occasions, when beholding the expanse of water before him, he has said, with a pensive ejaculation, 'We have no water in Cambridgeshire;' and subsequently, on noticing the spreading foliage of Lord de Clifford's park, he has observed, with the same mournful accent; 'Ah, Sir, we have no such trees as these in Leicestershire.' And when at this time he arrived at a point which presented the grandest assemblage of beauty; he paused in silence to gaze on the rocks of St. Vincent; and the Avon, and the dense woods; and the distant Severn, and the dim blue mountains of Wales; when (with that devotional spirit which accorded with the general current of his feelings) in an ecstacy he exclaimed; 'Oh, if these outskirts of the Almighty's dominion can, with one glance, so oppress the heart with gladness, what will be the disclosures of eternity, when the full revelation shall be made of the things not seen, and the river of the City of God!'"

* Since the above note was written the noble "Suspension Bridge" has been completed, adding another object of beauty and admiration to the wondrous scene.

Digitized by Google

NOTE VIII. Page 16.

And Portishead's bold promontory stood
Full in our front, and crown'd with waving wood.

Were we looking around the country for a place of quietude and repose to pass a few days or even weeks at, we know of none that we would select before this silvan spot. We would take up our abode at "*our Inn*"—we like the good old appellative, it savours of the country as *Hotel* does of the town. The latter, moreover, has become—like many other instances of bad taste, in this age of puffing and pretence—the common designation of many a way-side ale-house in several parts of the kingdom. The house, which has good accommodation, stands alone, and just where it ought to stand, on the extreme verge of the promontory, overhanging the water, in woody seclusion; and wears the appearance, as it has in reality, much of the comfort of a private mansion.

From the summit of the woody hill at the extremity of the promontory, extensive and very noble prospects open to the view.

To the east—bounded by a bold hilly range on the south, extending from Rownham ferry nearly to Clevedon—is a varied and beautiful landscape, with the village of Portbury in the midst, once a Roman town and principal place of the district. Beyond are the high grounds by which may be traced the course of the Avon, itself unseen; and beyond those the Cotswold hills which bound the far horizon. To the north, between the rich vale of Gloucester and the Forest of Dean pours the broad and rapid Severn, and following the line of the Monmouthshire coast, are the wide Caldicot levels, bounded on the north by a bold range of hills, extending from the borders of the river Usk to those of the Wye.

On the western side of this mount, and projecting a little way into the water is Portishead *point*. It appears that a small

Digitized by Google

fort was formerly erected here which commanded the passage of the Channel, and which surrendered, in 1645, to one of Cromwell's Colonels, acting under the orders of Sir Thomas Fairfax.*

The approach to the village of Portishead, with its handsome church and tower, about a mile distant, is very picturesque, while the flourishing growth of the fig and the vine indicates its mild and delightful climate.

NOTE IX. Page 18.

And hark! the songster of still listening Night,

The nightingale frequents this favoured spot. We mention this, lest the reader may deem its introduction in the text intended merely for poetic effect. We have heard his song with delight, while sitting in the bowery alcoves immediately adjoining the mansion at the *Head*, to the locality of which these favourite birds seem partial.

* Two or three guns have been recently mounted here—1865.

Digitized by Google

SECOND CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SECOND CANTO.

THE SEVERN, WITH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS—RETURN OF THE GREAT WESTERN STEAM SHIP FROM HER FIRST VOYAGE—VIEW OF THE MONMOUTHSHIRE MOUNTAINS, WITH REMINISCENCES—RUINS OF WALTON CASTLE—CLEVEDON—COLERIDGE—CLEVEDON COURT, ELTON — BROCKLEY HALL AND COOMBE — VALE OF WRINGTON—BIRTH-PLACE OF LOCKE—BARLEY-WOOD, RESIDENCE OF HANNAH MORE—BLAGDON, LANGHORNE—CHEDDAR CLIFFS AND VILLAGE.

I.

Day faintly dawns upon the hills—while slow,
Above the wave, Night's misty shadows rise;
Gathering their grey robes into clouds—and lo!
Morn's roseate hue steals o'er the eastern skies,
Till earth deep blushes with etherial dyes.
Now, on that mount, that overlooks the bay,*
Where many a storm-worn ship securely lies,
The wanderer stands, and meditates the lay,
That wiles the passing hours, and cheers him on his way.

* Anchorage of Kingroad.

Digitized by Google

II.

Far, gliding down, majestically grand,
Thy waters, Severn! foremost meet my sight;—
Immortal offspring of that mountain land,
Where huge Plinlimmon rears his giant height:—
Cradled mid cloud and storm, there first the light
Of morning smiles upon thy infant spring;
Then rushing onward with redoubled might—
As tributary streams their treasures bring—
Through fair Salopian vales, all wildly murmuring,

III.

By Shrewsbury's towers thou flowest, in thy pride;
Where erst his bands the fiery Hotspur led,[1]
And the fourth Harry, with his host, defied;—
Then on thy green banks made his gory bed,
While England's noblest blood their verdure fed.
And Cromwell's battle-cry came o'er thee, when
From Worcester's fight the baffled monarch fled,[2]
And foil'd his hunters, till he reach'd his den—
So fortune plays alike with kings and meaner men.

Digitized by Google

IV.

And thou hast seen on Tewkesbury's fatal field,[3]
Led on by stormy strife and glory's gust,
The lion-hearted Margaret forced to yield;
And the red rose low trailing in the dust.
Victim of faction, violence, and lust,
Thy banks have echoed to *his* shrieks, that came
From Berkeley's towers, unfaithful to their trust;[4]
When fiends of hell, bereft of ruth and shame,
Did, in the sight of heaven, a deed without a name!

V.

Turn from those times of savage war, to days
Of truer glory; when sage Science leads—
Ambitious only of bright civic bays—
Her emulative sons to nobler deeds,
Than when an empire falls, or nation bleeds:—
While Peace, fair daughter of the sky, bestows—
Compar'd to which a conq'ror's wreaths are weeds—
Upon the blood-stain'd world a blest repose;
And pours her healing balm, to soften human woes.

Digitized by Google

VI.

Hark! borne upon the breeze, that signal-gun—
And lo! dark looming o'er the trembling tide,[5]
Coming in triumph from her voyage won,
Bristowa's boast,—Britannia's latest pride!
For, with the foremost she hath been, to guide
Her followers o'er the broad Atlantic wave:—
Powerful alike in breeze or calm to glide—
And when the winds of ocean wildly rave,
None bolder, in her might, the tempest's force to brave.

VII.

Strange wonder-working Spirit! from the strife
Of stern opposing forces fiercely bred;—
From elemental nature springs thy life,
By fuel from earth's bowels, fiercely fed:—
Pent from the birth, within thy brazen bed,
Thou strugglest, like some Titan, to be free;
Till tam'd by art, by science gently led,
Onward thou boundest over land or sea,
And conquerest time and space with dread rapidity!

Digitized by Google

VIII.

O'er the green hills, that skirt the Severn sea,
The Pilgrim treads—oft pausing, on his way,
To gaze upon those mountains,[6] whither he
Had loved to wander in his earlier day:
And now their blue tops catch the morning ray,
As the light-floating mists below them lie;
While that far northern summit,* darkly gray,
That overhangs thy banks, romantic Wye!
Looks over many a land, from out his stormy sky.

IX.

And he hath roam'd by Isca's† sounding stream,
Yea, worship'd on thy summit, Skyrrid-vawr![‡]
While round him rested, like some glorious dream,
Scenes of fair beauty and creative powér:—
And often watch'd, at evening's silent hour,
The setting-sun empurpleing thy side, [tower,
Bold Blorenge! and that mount‖ which, like a
Upriseth, conical, in lonely pride,—
And now within a cloud his lofty head doth hide.

* Wynd Cliff. † River Usk. ‡ Skyrrid. ‖ Sugar-Loaf.

Digitized by Google

X.

From distant scenes, and musings o'er the past,
I sadly turn—and now before me stand
The lone remains* of that which could not last;
But fell before Time's all-destroying hand:[7]—
Hence issued forth at morn the hunter-band,
And here they feasted sumptuously at night,
With mirth and song, at lordly wealth's command;
But fickle pleasure long hath ta'en her flight,
And pomp and splendour now are vanish'd from our sight.

XI.

While in their place gray Ruin lonely reigns—
And for the hunter's horn, now nought is heard
But tinklings of the sheep-bell o'er the plains
And verdant hills—where Silence scarce is stirr'd
From her deep sleep, e'en by the voice of bird,
A calm so holy seems to breathe around;—
But from the pebbly shore, where rude rocks gird
Old Ocean with their time-enduring bound,
Comes a low voice that soothes my spirit with its sound.

* Ruins of Walton Castle.

Digitized by Google

XII.

Clevedon, fair Clevedon sits above the sea[8]—
Smiling with beauty on the sunny side
That sloping skirts her hill—where breezes free
Come health-inspiring from the flowing-tide :—
Here love the fig and fuschia to abide,
And bloom amid the softness of its clime ;
While the heart gladdens at her prospects wide,
Mindep's* broad hills, unbent by storm or time,
With Cambria's lengthening coast, and mountain-tops sublime.

XIII.

And the "old village," lying at her feet, [green ;
With darkening elms embower'd and orchards
Where stands that Cottage, whilom the retreat[9]
Of him† who threw such interest o'er its scene,
As marks the spot where Genius once hath been.
Here, with young Love and lofty Hope, he came,
With introverted eye and soul serene,
To woo lone quiet, and to nurse the flame
That glow'd within his breast, and lit his path to fame.

* *Mindep*—so spelt in old maps, &c. † S. T. Coleridge.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

There, as in other days, the Stranger sees
That lowly Cot, beneath its sheltering hill;
The "sea's faint murmur" comes upon the breeze,
The "rose peeps at the chamber window" still;—
And there, unscath'd by winter's icy chill,
"The myrtles blossom in the open air,"
And its soft breathings with their fragrance fill;
So like the past it yet a look doth wear—
All, save the "jasmine bower around its porch," is there.

XV.

Within that porch he sat, and gaz'd on heaven—
"And watch'd the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round—and mark'd the star of even
Serenely brilliant, shine opposite."
'Twas thus he mus'd and sung, and thus the flight
Of silent time went happily away:—
But cankering cares intrude, and gloomy night
Treads on the footsteps of the fairest day—
Alas! that love or song should ever know decay.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

Then fare thee well, blithe daughter of the hill !*
Around whose feet the ceaseless waters flow ;—
O'er thee may gentle Peace preside, and still
The breeze, health-bearing, play around thy brow.
Adown that steep-way, where those old oaks throw
Their sturdy branches o'er the passer's head,
With foot elastic and with joy we go—
By love of beauty and of nature led—
O'er vales as green and fair, and loftier heights to tread.

XVII.

Now, by our path, a verdant ridge uprose—
And, at its feet a stately mansion,† grey
With time and weather, sits in lone repose ;
Basking, like age, beneath the noon-tide ray :—
It wears an aspect of the olden day—
Buttress, and porch, and high-arch'd window, where
Red roses, with the fig and laurel, stray ;
Throwing soft beauty o'er what else were bare,
And sighing forth their sweets upon the summer air.

* Upper Clevedon. † Clevedon Court.

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

While, in its rear, a fair and sylvan scene
Is spread around—where varied slopes incline,
With arbute-trees and terraces between,
Mingled with myrtle and the flaunting vine;—
And o'er that rocky steep the storm-bent pine
Hangs, with its gnarl'd and twisted branches, prone;
Fit home for him* who wooed the tuneful Nine—
Touching his graceful harp with classic tone—
And truthful made the old Ascræan bard our own.

XIX.

Then led by Tickenham's bold heights our way—
Whose sides precipitous were sprent with wood;
While o'er its dreary moor our lone path lay,
Where erst the sea-tide pour'd its briny flood:—
And on through silent meads, whose solitude
Was broken only by the passer's tread;
Until that stately tower† before him stood,[10]
Where Backwell's hill uprear'd its rugged head,
And Brockley's vale below in verdant beauty spread.

* The late Sir Charles A. Elton, the translator of the works of Hesiod. † The beautiful Tower of Backwell.

Digitized by Google

XX.

There, mid tall elms and graceful cypress trees,
Enrich'd by Art, its noble Hall doth stand;[11]
While, high in front, the pausing stranger sees
Majestic woods look down upon the land:
And where the green and sunny glades expand,
Beneath those antique oaks, the dun deer rest;
Or fly, if but a breeze the leaves hath fann'd;
While, in mid air, the heron, ancient guest,
Is seen, with heavy wing, returning to her nest.

XXI.

Bird for fierce sport—as in the olden time,
Methinks I see some Baron, with his train,
Forth-coming from his gate at morning's prime,
With hound and hawk, the hunting ground to gain.
Up springs the quarry from some pool or plain;
When, from his fist, the well-train'd falcon flies—
All effort from her grasp to flee in vain—
"At one fell swoop" she strikes him from the skies,
And low, with plumage torn, her blood-stained victim lies.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

That vision past—and now the silent gloom
And rugged grandeur of thy deep ravine,[12]
Surround my solitude, romantic Coombe![*]
Here Nature, in her various mood, hath been,
To form, with matchless hand, a sylvan scene,
Where beauty and sublimity combine;—
While Fancy finds her paradise terrene;
And deities of old would scarce repine
To quit, for bowers like these, their groves and haunts divine.

XXIII.

High-pinnacled with rock, its orient side,
Like some war-beaten battlement, appears
Above the trees, now waving in their pride;—
While the grey cliff its moss and lichen wears,
Born of the sun, and fed by dewy tears:—
And o'er that adverse bank—on whose steep crest
The shadowy wood a screen of foliage rears—
Comes a rich radiance from the glowing west,
That on its rival's brow doth, like a glory, rest!

* Brockley Coombe.

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

Here Meditation, in sublimer mood,
May seek staid Wisdom, and his presence meet—
Far from those haunts where grosser cares intrude,
Wooing lone Silence in her deep retreat—
And listen to the lore he might repeat:—
While Painting and sweet Poesy may come,
To catch inspiring thoughts at Nature's feet;
Nor deem it needful other climes to roam
For nobler scenes than grace their own fair island-home.

XXV.

Emerging from that shadowy glen—how clear
And cheerful look'd the light upon its hill[13]!*
While o'er its paths, though dreary they appear,
And, save the lark's sweet anthem, all is still—
Comes gentle Peace, the pensive mind to fill.
And hence the Wanderer, with delighted eye,
Reviews the scenes he late hath trod, until
O'er wood-crown'd summits he approacheth nigh
Where Wrington's lovely vale all tranquilly doth lie.

* Broadfield Down.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

And on its southern slope, in modest guise,
A low-roof'd cottage rests—along its side
The trellis'd rose and clematis arise,
While lofty elms the light and shade divide:—
Above, a silvan bank doth sheltering hide
A dim sequester'd walk—and from its brow
Mindep's dark woods and mountains are descried,
With that sweet valley, spreading far below,
Through whose green meads you trace the faintly murmuring Yeo.

XXVII.

It was the sweet secluded home* of one
Of England's favour'd daughters—there she woo'd
The Muses' fostering smiles, and praises won,
That spread a halo round her solitude;—
Drawing the gifted few, the great and good,
To render homage to her worth and name;—
But priz'd above them all, howe'er endued—
For deeds inspir'd by charity's pure flame,—
The "still small voice" that spoke far more to her than fame.

* Barley-Wood, once the residence of Hannah More. See her Memoirs by The Rev. H. Thompson.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

There, in the shadow of that village-tower,*—
Whose fair proportion doth all eyes engage—
Stands the low dwelling, which beheld the hour
That usher'd into life the future Sage,†
The pride, the light and glory of his age.
With him the laws of intellect began
To be unfolded in his lucid page;
And, scorning foes, his course he nobly ran,—
Th' undaunted friend of truth, of liberty, and man.

XXIX.

The palaces of princes, lordly domes,
Would hide oblivious each 'diminished head,'
Were but the heaven-born sons of humble homes
Compar'd with those their gilded roofs have bred
From his paternal farm, lo! Newton led
The universe of matter to explore;
While the dim shelter of that scanty shed,
Sent forth a Locke,[14] his gifted light to pour
Upon the world of mind, where all was dark before!

* Wrington. † John Locke.

Digitized by Google

XXX.

Bright shone the sun, as up the northern side
Of Mindep's steep ascent the pilgrim strode;
Oft pausing to behold the prospect wide—
While, at his feet, Blagdon, the calm abode
Of learned Langhorne* lay—who shewed the road
That leads to life divine in realms above:—
And oft the Muses' mount he graceful trode;
With Flora wander'd through some fabled grove,
Or traced in tenderest lays the memory of his love.

XXXI.

The sky hath chang'd—and o'er its soft deep blue,
Dark leaden clouds their gloomy pall have spread;
As though they met a summer-storm to brew—
Ill fares the traveller's unshelter'd head
Upon broad Mindep then—nor tree, nor shed,
Nor hospitable roof within his way;
But onward still the wanderer doth tread,
Till Cheddar's deepening chine, all lone and gray,[15]
And "hush'd in grim repose," now full before him lay.

* The translator of Plutarch.

Digitized by Google

XXXII.

It is a wild and wondrous scene—down rift,
From his rude forehead to his rocky feet,
Stands the bold mountain o'er that fearful clift:—
There dread Sublimity hath ta'en her seat,
Where furious Flood and fiercer Tempest meet,
To do the biddings of their father, Time:—
While sleepless Echo doth their songs repeat,
Of wreck, and death, destruction's woes sublime;
Which they have witness'd since the world was in its prime.

XXXIII.

There are low mutterings in the air—and down
That dim and deep defile, the sullen sky
Doth o'er those broken summits darkly frown:—
Then flashes come upon the startled eye!
And the black raven sweeps affrighted by,
Scar'd from the rock, where lies his bleeding prey;
While rolls the distant thunder, and the cry
Of seeming voices comes, as in dismay,
From the resounding caves—then slowly dies away.

Digitized by Google

XXXIV.

'Twas but a prelude to the wilder war,
The elemental powers that now arose;
As the fierce Lightning, from his fiery car,
Red arrows, wing'd with flame, incessant throws;
Fast as a Dacian archer on his foes:—
While louder, deeper, like the crash of doom,
The dread artillery of heaven grows—
Till seem'd those rocks to reel amid the gloom,
And that dark gulph, their cradle, would become
their tomb!

XXXV.

Soft, as an Infant smiling in its sleep,
Soon beam'd the sun upon those heights above;
Illuming every crag and ivied steep—
So on the dark soul looks redeeming love!
While Peace sat musing, like a brooding dove,
O'er the chang'd scene—and on the evening air
Came a wild fragrance from green ledge and cove,
That nourish those sweet flowers* that blossom there,
Like hidden worth, mid all that's desolate and bare.

*The Dianthus Caryophillus, or Mountain-pink; here called the Cheddar-pink, not being found elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

Digitized by Google

XXXVI.

Now past the gloomy grandeur of that glen,
Bright verdant spots and cottages appear
Amid the cheerful sight and haunts of men; [near,
While Cheddar's crystal springs, fast-flowing
Make joyful music to the lonely ear:—
And o'er its trees the village-smoke arose
Against the silent sky[16]—promise of cheer,
Which glads the weary heart, and calm repose,
That wait the Wanderer there, at evening's welcome close.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO SECOND CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO SECOND CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 42.

By Shrewsbury's towers thou flowest in thy pride;
Where erst his bands the fiery Hotspur led,

The battle of Shrewsbury took place in 1403, between Henry the fourth and the troops of the great Earl of Northumberland, led on by his son Harry Piercy, surnamed Hotspur. "We shall scarcely find," says Hume, "any battle in those ages where the shock was more terrible and more constant. Henry exposed his person in the thickest of the fight: his gallant son, whose military achievements were afterwards so renowned, and who here performed his novitiate in arms, signalised himself on his father's footsteps; and even a wound, which he received in the face with an arrow, could not oblige him to quit the field. Piercy supported that fame which he had acquired in many a bloody combat; and Douglas, his ancient enemy and now his friend, still appeared his rival, amidst the horror and confusion of the day. This nobleman performed feats of valour which are almost incredible; he seemed determined that the King of England should that day fall by his arm: he sought him all over the field of battle; and as Henry, either to elude the attacks of the enemy upon his person, or to encourage his own men by the belief of his presence everywhere, had accoutred

Digitized by Google

several captains in the royal garb, the sword of Douglas rendered this honour fatal to many. But while the armies were contending in this furious manner, the death of Piercy, by an unknown hand, decided the victory, and the royalists prevailed.

"There are said to have fallen that day, on both sides, near two thousand three hundred gentlemen; but the persons of greatest distinction were on the king's; the Earl of Stafford, Sir Hugh Shirly, Sir Nicholas Gansel, Sir Hugh Mortimer, Sir John Massey, Sir John Calverly. About six thousand private men perished, of whom two thirds were of Piercy's army. The Earls of Worcester and Douglas were taken prisoners. The former was beheaded at Shrewsbury; the latter was treated with the courtesy due to his rank and merit."—*Hist. of England.*

NOTE II. Page 42.

And Cromwell's battle-cry came o'er thee, when
From Worcester's fight the baffled monarch fled,

"With an army of about thirty thousand men, Cromwell fell upon Worcester; and attacking it on all sides, and meeting with little resistance, except from Duke Hamilton and General Middleton, broke in upon the disordered royalists. The streets of the City were strewed with dead. Hamilton, a nobleman of bravery and honour, was mortally wounded; Massey wounded and taken prisoner; the king himself, having given many proofs of personal valour, was obliged to fly. The whole Scottish army was either killed or taken prisoners. The country people, inflamed with national antipathy, put to death the few that escaped from the field of battle."—*Hume.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE III. Page 43.

And thou hast seen on Tewkesbury's fatal field,

"The same day on which this decisive battle (the Battle of Barnet) was fought, Queen Margaret and her son, now about eighteen years of age, and a young prince of great hopes, landed at Weymouth, supported by a small body of French forces. When this princess received intelligence of her husband's captivity, and of the defeat and death of the Earl of Warwick, her courage, which had supported her under so many disastrous events, here quite left her; and she immediately foresaw all the dismal consequences of this calamity. At first she took sanctuary in the Abbey of Beaulieu; but being encouraged by the appearance of Tudor Earl of Pembroke, and Courtney Earl of Devon, of the Lords Wenlock and St. John, with other men of rank, who exhorted her still to hope for success, she resumed her former spirit, and determined to defend to the utmost the ruins of her fallen fortunes. She advanced through the counties of Devon, Somerset, and Gloucester, increasing the army on each day's march; but was at last overtaken by the rapid and expeditious Edward at Tewkesbury, on the banks of the Severn. The Lancastrians were here totally defeated; the Earl of Devon and Lord Wenlock were killed in the field; the Duke of Somerset, and about twenty other persons of distinction, having taken shelter in a church, were surrounded, dragged out, and immediately beheaded: about three thousand on their side fell in battle, and the army was entirely dispersed.

"Queen Margaret and her son were taken prisoners, and brought to the king, who asked the prince, after an insulting manner, how he dared to invade his dominions? The young prince, more mindful of his high birth than of his present fortune, replied, that he came thither to claim his just inheritance. The ungenerous Edward, insensible to pity, struck him on the face with his gauntlet; and the Dukes of Clarence and Glou-

Digitized by Google

cester, Lord Hastings, and Sir Thomas Gray, taking the blow as a signal for farther violence, hurried the prince into the next apartment, and there dispatched him with their daggers. Margaret was thrown into the Tower; King Henry expired in that confinement a few days after the battle of Tewkesbury; but whether he died a natural or violent death is uncertain."—*Hume.*

NOTE IV. Page 43.

Thy banks have echoed to his *shrieks, that came*
From Berkeley's towers,—

"But it was impossible that the people, however corrupted by the barbarity of the times, still farther inflamed by faction, could for ever remain insensible to the voice of nature. Here a wife had first deserted, next invaded, and then dethroned her husband; had made her minor son an instrument in this unnatural treatment of his father; had by lying pretences seduced the nation into a rebellion against their sovereign; had pushed them into violence and cruelties that had dishonoured them: all those circumstances were so odious in themselves, and formed such a complicated scene of guilt, that the least reflection sufficed to open men's eyes, and make them detest this flagrant infringement of every public and private duty. The suspicions which soon arose of Isabella's criminal commerce with Mortimer, the proofs which daily broke out of this part of her guilt, increased the general abhorrence against her, and her hypocrisy, in publicly bewailing with tears the king's unhappy fate, was not able to deceive even the most stupid and most prejudiced of her adherents. In proportion as the queen became the object of public hatred, the dethroned monarch, who had been the victim of her crimes and her ambition, was regarded with pity, with friendship, with veneration: and men became sensible, that all his misconduct, which faction had so

Digitized by Google

much exaggerated, had been owing to the unavoidable weakness, not to any voluntary depravity of his character. The Earl of Leicester, now Earl of Lancaster, to whose custody he had been committed, was soon touched with those generous sentiments; and besides using his prisoner with gentleness and humanity, he was suspected to have entertained still more honourable intentions in his favour. The king, therefore, was taken from his hands, and delivered over to Lord Berkeley, and Mantravers, and Gournay, who were entrusted alternately each for a month with the charge of guarding him. While he was in the custody of Berkeley, he was still treated with the gentleness due to his rank and his misfortunes; but when the turn of Mantravers and Gournay came, every species of indignity was practised against him, as if their intention had been to break entirely the prince's spirit, and to employ his sorrows and afflictions, instead of more violent and more dangerous expedients, for the instruments of his murder. * * * But as this method of laying Edward in his grave, appeared still too slow to the impatient Mortimer, he secretly sent orders to the two keepers, who were at his devotion, instantly to despatch him; and these ruffians contrived to make the manner of his death as cruel and barbarous as possible."—*Hume.*

NOTE V. Page 44.

And lo! dark looming o'er the trembling tide

The "Great Western" steam-ship. This celebrated and successful vessel was all but the first steamer which effected a voyage across the Atlantic; the "Sirius," which had sailed from Ireland, having arrived at New York, but a few hours only before her. She was built at Bristol, and is a splendid example of the enterprise of her merchants, and the skill of her artizans. We have more than once had the pleasure of seeing

Digitized by Google

her arrive from America, as described in the text,* and occasionally outstripping all competitors in her rapid course up the Channel.

NOTE VI. Page 45.

—oft pausing, on his way,
To gaze upon those mountains,

The Monmouthshire hills—which have a very noble appearance from this part of the Somersetshire coast. The Wynd Cliff rises to a great height immediately over the Wye above Piercefield, and commands a view from its summit over the Severn and adjoining counties, which for grandeur, beauty, and extent, is perhaps unrivalled in England.

The Skyridd-vawr, or great Skyrrid, called also St. Michael's or the holy mountain, is a bold and isolated hill to the north of Abergavenny, while the range of the Blorenge stretches to the south, skirted by the river Usk at its feet. The Sugar-loaf, a lofty conical hill, as its name implies, rises a few miles to the west of the Skyridd-vawr. These are all clearly distinguished from this side of the Channel in favourable weather.

NOTE VII. Page 46.

—and now before me stand
The lone remains of that which could not last;
But fell before Time's all-destroying hand:—

"Walton Castle, built on the highest part of the hill, but now in ruins. It commands an extensive prospect both of sea

* She was then returning from her first voyage.

Digitized by Google

and land. It was originally erected for a hunting-seat, and is of an octangular shape, having a low round tower at each angle, with an embattled wall between them. In the centre of the area stands the keep, also octangular; with a small turret of the same shape, on the south-east side, rising above the rest of the structure; the roof and floors are fallen in, and no use is made of any part, excepting a small portion of the ballium, which serves as a dairy-house, for the tenant of a neighbouring farm."—*Rutter.*

From its appearance it could never have been intended for a place of strength or defence, though built in the castellated style. It formerly belonged, with the manor, to a former Earl Poulett, of Hinton St. George, who used it as a hunting-seat, and over the entrance of one of the towers, the arms of that noble family—three swords in pile—are still to be seen.

It forms an object of interest, at the distance of an easy walk from Clevedon; and having many of the constituents of noble landscape—hill and valley, wood and water—around, it is much frequented by the visitors at that pleasant watering-place.

The manor-house stands under the southern slope of the hill, surrounded by lofty trees in the finest part of the valley, which between it and Clevedon has a very beautiful and park-like appearance.

NOTE VIII. Page 47.

Clevedon, fair Clevedon sits above the sea—

New Clevedon stands principally on the southern slope of a rocky hill, which forms the extremity of a range of heights extending between it and Portishead on one side, and Leigh Down on the other, and mostly consists of detached villas. Some are erected along the brow of the precipitous cliff facing

Digitized by Google

the sea, and others, more sheltered, in front of the little bay below. Much of the scenery is bold and picturesque, and the walks on the hills and around are very delightful.

On the eminence immediately adjoining the new church may be enjoyed one of the finest views in the county. From the *old* village, immediately below you, the eye is carried over a rich and extensive level, the fore-ground thickly interspersed with hedge-row elms, that in the mass have a forest-like appearance —till it fixes on the fine old church and tower of Yatton. To the left is the beautiful vale of Bourton, bounded by Backwell Hill and Broadfield Down; the pretty tower and spire of Congresbury Church rising above the plain below, spotted with villages and farm houses, while the blue hills of Mindep form the horizon beyond. On the right rises the bold and rocky front of Worle Hill, looking down on the Severn Sea, the sister Holmes in the midst, and the mountains of Wales fading in the distance.

Altogether—from the mildness of its clime and the varied and picturesque beauty of its scenery—Clevedon is a very delightful place for summer-resort, and is now much frequented.

NOTE IX. PAGE 47.

Where stands that Cottage, whilom the retreat

On descending to Clevedon *old* village, and turning to the right at the bottom of the hill, a few hundred yards walk brings you to a small house by the road-side. It stands within a garden, with a southern aspect, and sheltered from the north by a rising knoll of rock and verdure. It was the cottage of Coleridge. Hither, among the many that seek these shores in pursuit of health or pleasure, a few congenial spirits come to

Digitized by Google

muse over a scene, made memorable as the temporary abode of one of our most gifted poets. Here he came with his young bride to spend the honeymoon, and here he for some time remained amid the quiet he loved, and which all such men must love, meditating on, and saturating his mind with the beauties and glories of nature.

The following lines by the poet as having been "composed at Clevedon," and being descriptive of the scene, may be inserted here.

"Most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'er-grown
With white-flower'd jasmine, and the broad-leaved myrtle;
(Meet emblems they of innocence and love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve,
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world so hush'd!
The stilly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of Silence."

These also, from a little poem entitled "Reflections on having left a place of Retirement," evidently designate his abode here.

"Low was our pretty Cot; our tallest rose
Peep'd at the chamber-window. We could hear
At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The sea's faint murmur. In the open air
Our myrtles blossom'd; and across the porch
Thick jasmine twin'd: the little landscape round
Was green and woody, and refresh'd the eye.
It was a spot which you might aptly call
The valley of Seclusion."

Although half a century has elapsed since these lines were written, so little has time or change operated here, that the

Digitized by Google

description is equally applicable at the present moment as it was then. The myrtles are still blossoming, and the "tallest rose" literally now peeps at the chamber window; but, though the porch be still shaded with greenery, we miss the "thick jasmine" that then "twin'd" across it.

The cottage, which is small, was, some time since, occupied by a peasant, or labouring man; and on our visiting it, he expressed some surprise, that so many persons came to see it; for, "as for his part, he could see nothing in or about it, to excite curiosity!" The time may not be far distant when, by the more general diffusion of education, the English peasantry may become as familiar with the works, and consequently with the lives, of our popular poets, as the Scottish are already with theirs.

NOTE X. Page 50.

Until that stately tower before him stood,
Where Backwell's hill uprear'd its rugged head,

"Backwell Church is an ornamental building, standing on a picturesque site; having high rocky eminences, with deep glens, partly clothed with coppice-wood and shrubs on the south and east, and a fine rich valley, bounded by distant hills in front. Its elegant, yet substantial, tower is surmounted by richly ornamented pinnacles, connected by an open balustrade, which, being flung into deep relief by the back ground of wood, produces a very pleasing and picturesque effect.

"The tower of this church is almost unrivalled, both in its design and execution, and is evidently of two eras; the lower stories partaking of the early English, the upper one being of a more decorative character. It is traditionally reported, that a

Digitized by Google

storm in 1603 greatly injured this, as well as many other of the fine Somersetshire towers, and that the upper story was afterwards rebuilt."—*Rutter.*

NOTE XI. Page 51.

There, mid tall elms and graceful cypress trees,
Enrich'd by Art, its noble Hall doth stand;

Brockley Hall, the property of John Hugh Smyth Pigott, Esq. "This handsome seat combines comfort with elegance, and consists of a spacious entrance hall, surrounded with a numerous suite of apartments, richly furnished, and contains a series of paintings, consisting of choice specimens of the ancient masters, combined with a liberal selection from living artists; among the later are several from the pencil of Thomas Barker, of Bath, well known as the painter of "The Woodman." The front of the house is adorned with an elegant Grecian portico, with fluted columns; and in the centre of the roof is an octagonal dome, fitted up as an observatory.

"Brockley Hall is surrounded by shrubberies and pleasure-grounds, extending a considerable distance. The park, as well as the rest of the grounds, is luxuriantly wooded; not a tree has been allowed to be cut for several generations; amongst these trees is a noble cypress, which in size and beauty equals, if not surpasses, those of the luxuriant climate of Italy. It is also well stocked with deer, and contains an ancient Heronry, an object now become rare, but formerly much coveted by English gentlemen, for the sport afforded by these birds in the favourite amusement of hawking."—*Rutter.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE XII. Page 52.

the silent gloom,
And rugged grandeur of thy deep ravine,

"The village of Brockley is celebrated for the romantic ravine, called Brockley Coombe, situated on its south-eastern side, and affording an avenue leading to the summit of the hill and the downs. It is a fine romantic glen, more than a mile in length, and very narrow, each side being a steep cliff of transcendant richness and beauty. The crags resemble ruins, and every fissure of the rocks affords an asylum for vegetation, which springs vigorously from them, and shades the surface covered with mosses of the richest tints. In the deepest parts the trees are fine and lofty, and the rocks* almost inaccessible to the height of nearly three hundred feet, projecting in many places, and towering above the tops of the branches with rude grandeur. The steep ascent and rugged surface of them on each side, are rendered very romantic by the fantastically wreathed forms of the roots of many trees and shrubs which shoot out their branches across the glen.

* * * * * *

"Trees of all shapes and characters are here scattered in the most interesting confusion; the young aspiring ash mixes its elegant foliage with that of the oak; whilst the ivy, and the gayer flowering shrubs, wreathing their tendrils around the trunks and branches of the more naked trees, bestow an additional grace upon the whole.

"On one side of the Coombe is a lofty mass of limestone rock; yet the ledges of these rocks are so profusely ornamented with vegetation, as to resemble a garden fantastically suspended in

* "There is a small cave in the rocks on the eastern side, in which a hermit is said to have formerly dwelt."

Digitized by Google

the air. The rocks on the summit of the cliffs are sometimes illuminated by the setting sun, so as to resemble, in detached portions, the fortifications of a city in the distance. Its rays, when breaking through the different openings between the trees, and resting upon the edges of the variegated foliage, on the broken lines of rock, or on whatever object they chance to illuminate, throw a beautifully transparent golden tinge, such as the painter delights to observe in nature, and aims to appropriate by his art.

"A ramble over the summit of the rocks, to view the fine effects of light and shade on the woods, especially when enriched by the varied tints of autumn, will amply repay the visitor for his additional exertion."—*Rutter's Delineation.*

NOTE XIII. Page 53.

Emerging from that shadowy glen—how clear
And cheerful look'd the light upon its hill!

Broadfield Down—which opens before you after ascending for a mile and a half, on a good carriage-road, through the gloomy grandeur of Brockley Coombe. There is a delightful drive from hence continued through the grounds, which visitors to the Coombe should take, for the sake of the splendid views, towards the west, commanded from its summit, embracing the beautiful and extensive vale beneath, the Clevedon and Weston hills, the Severn Sea and the mountains of Wales.

A walk of two or three miles over the down leads to the vale and village of Wrington, which, including its elegant church and tower, backed by the Mindep hills, come suddenly upon the sight, and produce a striking and most beautiful picture.

Digitized by Google

NOTE XIV. Page 55.

While the dim shelter of that scanty shed,
Sent forth a Locke,

"It is found, on examining a Biographical Dictionary, of distinguished individuals in all ages and countries amounting to about five thousand in number, that the largest proportion are Frenchmen, next the English, Scotch, and Germans, and next the Italians, Dutch, and other nations. How it happens that there have been more men in France than in England who have arrived at distinction is accounted for, not by the comparative largeness of the country, but by the circumstance that the French make a point of patronising men of genius, whether they be poor or otherwise; while in England, few persons of talent, if they be not rich or well-dressed, have the chance of receiving any patronage from the great. Out of the five thousand individuals, about a sixth have been descended from the upper classes, and there are not more than a dozen kings; another sixth are of unknown origin, but may be presumed to belong to the middle ranks, of which there is distinctly about another sixth; the remaining three sixths, or the one half, have been either descended from the trading or poorer classes, and have personally undergone severe struggles with poverty in elevating themselves to distinction."—"*The Efforts of Genius.*" *Art, in Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.*

NOTE XV. Page 56.

Till Cheddar's deepening chine, all lone and gray.

As a more perfect conception of the characteristics of this sublime scene may be given to those who have not witnessed it,

Digitized by Google

from its description by other pens, the author avails himself of the following passages, taken from the "Banwell and Cheddar Guide."

"For years have the Cliffs of Cheddar engaged the pen of the poet, the pencil of the artist, and taxed the descriptive powers of the most imaginative and gifted. Where so much has been so well and ably done, a selection of a few of the most striking passages from the pages of those who have most vividly pictured this chasm, will do far more to convey a just idea of the spot to the reader, than any attempt by the writer of this Guide, however careful and laborious. It is unnecessary to 'gild refined gold, or paint the lily;' and the task of graphically and poetically describing this scene has already been accomplished. Collinson, in his History of Somersetshire, in reference to this locality, expresses himself thus:—'Proceeding from the village, through the winding passage, the Cliffs rise on either hand in the most picturesque forms, some of them being near eight hundred feet, and terminating in craggy pyramids on the right hand; several of them are perpendicular to the height of four hundred feet, and resemble the shattered battlements of vast castles. On the left hand, or west side, are two also of this form, which lean over the valley with a threatening aspect, and the tops of many others at the height of several hundred feet project over the heads of the spectator with terrific grandeur; in general the swelling projections on one side are opposed to corresponding hollows on the other, which is a strong indication that this immense gap was formed by some strong convulsion of the earth. On the right hand the cliffs are steeper than on the left, and are generally inaccessible, but beautifully interspersed with ivy, shrubs, small yew, and other trees which grow out of the fissures of the rocks up to the very summits; the awful scenery is continually changing, but to observe all its beauties it must be traversed backwards and forwards; in doing this there will be found ten points of view, which are grand beyond description, and where the prospects

Digitized by Google

exhibit that wild and tremendous magnificence which cannot fail impressing the mind of the spectator with awe and astonishment at the works of that power whose voice even the obdurate rocks obey and retire. Stupendous, however, as the Cliffs are, the top of Mendip is some hundred feet higher, sloping upwards from their tops in a gentle ascent, and affording a most extensive prospect over the southern and the western parts of this county, a considerable part of Wilts and Dorset, the Bristol Channel, the Holmes, and a long range of the coast of Wales.'

"From a 'Walk through the Western Counties of England,' by the Rev. Richard Warner, in 1799, we extract the following: 'On approaching Cheddar Cliffs, I could not but notice the very pleasing effect produced by a singular contrast—

'Vestibulum ante ipsum.'

at the entrance all is gentle and beautiful. A brook, clear as glass, rushing from the roots of the rocks, leads its murmuring course by the side of the road on the left hand, backed by a shrubby wood, at the edge of which rises a humble cottage, the calm retreat of health and peace, and on the opposite side the ground swells into a steep, sufficiently covered, however, with verdure and vegetation to form a soft feature in the scene; but a step further

'Primisque in faucibus orci.'

a sudden alteration takes place, the rocks shoot up in all their grandeur, their black summits, scarred with the tempests of heaven, nodding ruin on the head of the gazing spectator. Here, indeed, nature, working with a gigantic hand, has displayed a scene of no common grandeur. In one of those moments, when she convulses the world with the throes of an earthquake, she has burst asunder the rocky ribs of Mendip, and torn a chasm across its diameter of more than a mile in length. The vast abruption yawns from the summit down to the roots of the mountain, laying open to the sun a sublime and

Digitized by Google

tremendous scene—precipices, rocks, and caverns, of terrifying descent, fantastic forms, and gloomy variety. The rugged walls of the fissure rise in many places perpendicularly to the height of four hundred feet, and in others fall into obliquities of more than double that elevation. Whilst pacing their awful involutions, it requires but little imagination to fancy oneself bewildered amid the ruins of some stupendous castle, the gigantic work of distant times, when a whole nation lent its hand to the enormous labour, and the operation was effected by the united strength of congregated multitudes. The idea of ruined battlements and solitary towers is perpetually suggested by lofty crags and grotesque masses of rock, which stand detached from their parent hills, and lift their beetling heads over the distant road below. Though the character of this huge chine be in general that of terrific grandeur and rugged sublimity, it has notwithstanding some milder features; nature, in her passion for variety, having introduced a few touches of the picturesque, by occasionally throwing over the bare face of the rock a mantle of ivy, and sprinkling here and there, amongst the crags and hollows, the yew, the ash, and other mountainous trees. Nor has she provided entertainment for the *artist* alone; the botanist and mineralogist will have reason to applaud her bounty, whilst he creeps along the crags of Cheddar Cliffs, or treads the mazes of their caverns. Here the *Dianthus glaucus* discovers its rare and crimsoned head, accompanied by *Thelectra*, *Polypodia*, *Asplenia*, and many other plants equally curious and uncommon; and there are found *Lac Lunæ*, coralloids, stalactites, spars, and crystallisations.'

"We must conclude with a notice of the Cliffs, which appeared anonymously in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' taken from a series of excellent articles, under the title of 'The Sketcher,' now attributed to the elegant pen of the Rev. John Eagles:—'No one can form an idea of the peculiar beauty, I should say grandeur of these cliffs without studying them. From the general line of the country no suspicion could be entertained of

Digitized by Google

so fine a pass existing among the Mendip Hills—there are indeed many passages through them of various character, but there is not one to be compared to that of Cheddar, indeed there is nothing like it anywhere so far as my judgment goes. The rocks are in character the finest, in places perfectly precipitous to the depth perhaps of four hundred feet—they are magnificent in form and colour, and the numerous caverns and holes add much to the sublime of the scene. Many years since I visited it and sketched there. I was much gratified the other day by a fine subject of Cheddar, sketched on canvas by a friend of mine, Mr. Jackson, of Clifton, an artist of much genius, and in consequence I determined on the first opportunity to revisit the rocks—such soon occurred, and I must confess that their sublimity, magnificence, and beauty, far surpassed my recollection and expectation. An artist cannot find better studies for rock in detail, and should he be disposed to make figures of such subjects, he will find many as perfect in composition as he would desire. There is a kiln at the entrance, the smoke of which, rolling among the rocks, produces a fine effect; here, too, he will find admirable studies of caverns of every shape and depth—what a scene for a land storm! it is so treated in my friend's picture, which is promising. I think few would wind through this sublime pass without a sense of fear, the rocks, hanging over head, threatening to crush the intruder, and the yawning chasms close upon his footsteps, seem prepared, as if by magic, for his prison in the grave,—it is the region for genius and enchantment. It may be useful to mention that the sketcher will find very good accommodations, as there are two respectable inns at the little village, which are close to the scenery.'

"Caverns so generally abound in hills of the mountain limestone, that it is not extraordinary to find several among the Cliffs, which are shown by old women, who are constantly

Digitized by Google

following the footsteps of the visitor for that purpose. Warner, from whom we have just quoted, describes his visit to one of the caves; but, so far as they have been yet explored, they possess no remarkable feature, with the exception of the Stalactite Cave, discovered by Mr. George Cox, in 1837, and subsequently the Bone Cavern, at the further extremity of the Cliffs. To the former, however, we would more particularly direct attention, a description of which is thus given by Mr. C.:—'The roof resembles ancient sculpture, the formations are grotesque and fanciful; in one part you perceive the furniture of a Hindoo temple, the Black Prince, in another a mummy, elegant drapery and pillars from four to fifteen feet in height, fonts, transparent stalactite, likewise the substantial comforts of a farm-house, viz.—turkeys, tongues, a fat goose, bacon, bread, &c., are naturally pourtrayed; and the cavern is so perfectly clean and easy of access, that the most timid and delicate may explore it without inconvenience.'

"The cave is shown by Mr. Cox, who ably points out the various objects worthy of notice. The forms are not the mere effect of the imagination, or the fancy, which the visitor will behold in the different stalactites, each is so distinctively defined, that the same appearance is recognised by all. Perhaps the most striking are a jelly glass, adhering to the roofs, a brown loaf, and a fat goose; a font is as clearly defined, as though sculptured by the chisel of the most finished workman. A most pleasing effect is produced by a number of small crystal stalactites apparently supporting the roof, and whose reflection in the water, on a table rock, is most enchanting. The mummy is also an extraordinary natural formation, and when we reflect that during the life of one man, not the slightest addition is perceptible to any of the stalactites, though the water still continues to drop, the mind is bewildered with thoughts unable to grasp the ages this figure must have taken to form. Drapery as elegant and classic in its folds as ever artist chiselled, is suspended from many of the walls, and a variety of forms are

Digitized by Google

perceived, which to detail here, would occupy too great a portion of our time. The tones issuing from the stalactites, when struck, are similar to (those of) musical glasses; they are also semi-transparent, and have a pleasing glowing effect, when the candles are placed behind them. With the exception of an occasionally stooping of the body, the cavern may be seen with the most perfect ease; the paths are well gravelled, and free from wet; and ladies are enabled without soiling their apparel, to inspect every portion of this interesting interior.

"For the accommodation of visitors, Mr. C. has established pleasure-gardens, where parties bringing their own provisions may be entertained in lovely bowers, opposite the sheet of water, so remarkable for its crystalline clearness, which we pass on our approach to the Cliffs. We recommend it as a most delightful place for a pic-nic."—*Banwell and Cheddar Guide.*

"Nine considerable springs burst from the foot of the rocks, and almost immediately uniting together, form a beautiful stream, dashing over a rough bed of sand, mixed with shingles, and sprinkled with fragments of rock, over which the waters murmur, keeping in perpetual motion the curious aquatic plants, with which its surface is covered; and these mingle their deeper shades with the blue and amber-coloured cone of the fresh-water limpet, that adheres to the rocks, scattered over its bed. This stream has thus been commemorated by Drayton in his 'Polyolbion.'

'And Cheddar for meere grief his teene he could not wreake,
Gust forth so forceful streame, that he was like to breake
The greater banks of Axe, as from his mother's cave
He wander'd t'wards the sea.'"—*Rutter's Delin.*

Hannah More has the following passage in her correspondence, descriptive of a visit to this extraordinary scene.

"I have lived a most gloriously idle life, all the last months, rambling about the romantic hills and delicious vales of Somersetshire; it is full of enchanting scenery; the views are rather

Digitized by Google

interesting than magnificent; and the neighbourhood of the friend's house where I was, abound with the most smiling valleys, the most touching little home views, the prettiest rising and falling grounds, the clearest living streams, and the most lovely hanging woods I ever saw. These gentle scenes which are *agreste* without being savage, are, I am persuaded, more delightful to live amongst, than the blaze and the roar, the awful and the astonishing of the sublime; of this I am convinced, by a ride we took through the lofty cliffs of Cheddar, so stupendously romantic, that the shade of Ossian, or the ghost of Taliesin himself, might range, not undelighted, through them; my imagination was delighted, was confounded, was oppressed, and darted a thousand years back into the days of chivalry and enchantment, at seeing hang over my head, vast ledges of rock, exactly resembling mouldered castles and ruined abbeys. I had a delightful confusion of broken images in my head, without one distinct idea; but the delight was of so serious a nature, that I could hardly refrain from crying, especially when we sat down upon a fragment of rock, and heard one of Gray's odes finely set, and sung with infinite feeling. I would have given the world to have heard my favourite Ode to Melancholy, by Beaumont and Fletcher; you know it—

> 'An eye that's fastened to the ground,
> A tongue chained up without a sound;
> Gloomy cells and twilight groves,
> Places which pale Passion loves,' &c.

But these pensive pleasures should be repeated at long intervals, they wind up the mind too high, and infuse into the spirit a sentiment compounded of sadness and delight, which though it may qualify one to write odes, yet indisposes one for a much more indispensable thing—the enjoyment of the intercourse of ordinary society. But you will grow sick of these sombre scenes, though I think you would have performed the pilgrimage itself with enthusiasm."—*Letters of Hannah More.*

Digitized by Google

"Many travel on the Continent," observes a writer in a modern publication, "and cross the sea to view the heights of Parnassus, and there taste the Castalian spring, and to penetrate into the catacombs of Egypt; but I would shew them even in England objects of the same nature, very interesting to contemplate and examine. To confirm this, I would give a short description of a place or two round a spot where I once dwelt a short time. Or rather, I might have said, if you wish to see Parnassus in miniature, with the Castalian spring, go to Cheddar Cliffs, in the county of Somerset, and taste the pure water that flows at their feet; or if you wish to examine a catacomb, descend into Banwell Cave, in the same county. First call at Professor Beard's in your way, and there you will find bones of animals that lived before the flood; for though some say it was an hyenas' den, the *Savans* declare that there is every evidence of these animals being buried there by the deluge.

"To return to Cheddar:—Detained a short time at Axbridge, when on my way thither, I walked into the field at the end of Axbridge Church, and resting on the stile, with the Cheddar Cliffs about two miles distant, I was struck with the similarity of this view to another at Scala in Greece, a few miles distant from Delphi, where there is the same appearance. At Axbridge you see the Mendip Hills extending far on one hand, the Cheddar Cliffs rising high in the centre, and on the other hand the wide plains of Somersetshire stretching towards Bridgwater. At Scala the hills of Greece rise high all round; the plain of Salona is many miles over, lying at the foot of Parnassus towering in the midst. The Castalian spring gushes from a rock at the foot of the mountain: a torrent flows at the foot of Cheddar Cliffs, of water as pure as the stream of Delphi."

The Author of the present little work feeling the impossibility of doing, either in verse or prose, adequate justice to the grandeur and sublimity of this extraordinary scene, has not attempted it; but merely devoted a stanza or two in endeavouring to describe the effects of a passing thunder-storm, which occurred during a ramble through this tremendous chine.

Digitized by Google

NOTE XVI. Page 59.

And o'er its trees the village-smoke arose
Against the silent sky—

"Cheddar or Cheddre is a large but straggling village, deriving its name from *Ced* a conspicuous brow or height, and *dwr* water. It consists of three or four irregular streets, in one of which stands an ancient hexagonal cross. The situation is rendered exceedingly fine by the contrast between the lofty brow of the Cliff on one hand, and the rich and extensive level on the other. The slopes of the hill are everywhere diversified; being in some points excavated into deep recesses, and in others, swelling into bold projections, adorned with hanging woods, which, in autumn especially, exhibit the richest variety of tints.

"The continuous flat, called the Cheddar Moor, was, until these few years, studded over with British barrows or tumuli; but the plough and the harrow have entirely levelled them with the surrounding land, and every vestige of these ancient places of sepulture, entirely obliterated by inclosure and agriculture.

"The Manor of Cheddar was anciently a royal demesne, even in the times *(as we have seen)* of the Saxon monarchs; and so remained till it was granted with that of Axbridge and other possessions, by King John to Hugh de Welles, Archdeacon of Wells, who sold it 1229 to the Bishop; and to that see it was attached, until Bishop Barlow exchanged it 1548, for other lands, with Edward VI. Its present possessor is the Marquis of Bath."—*Delin. North-west Som.*

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THIRD CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THIRD CANTO.

WORLE HILL, "THE PASS OF ST. KEW"—RUINS OF WOODSPRING PRIORY—ANCHOR HEAD—LOSS OF A VESSEL ON THE WOLVES ROCKS—THE FLAT AND STEEP HOLMS—BIRNBECK—DROWNING OF THE BROTHERS ELTON—WESTON BAY—BANWELL HILL AND CAVES—UPHILL PARSONAGE, THE POET LISLE BOWLES—THE RIVER AXE — BURNHAM — THE MOORS — SHARPHAM PARK, FIELDING — WYRALL HILL — PLANTING OF THE CROSS — THE HOLY THORN—GLASTON ABBEY.

I.

Now, once more by the sea—on Worle's steep hill
We stood above that old "Pass of Saint Kew;"[1]
Whose rugged steps, from base to summit, still
With eye of faith, the pilgrim turns to view:—
And here he made his home, and there are few
Mid scenes more glorious—such as might inspire
Mute Contemplation with devotion due;
Or the rapt poet with that sacred fire
Which kindleth into song, and halloweth his lyre.

Digitized by Google

II.

And still in plain and modest guise appear,
When the bells chime upon a sabbath-day,
The rural people, from their hamlet near,
O'er the green hill, and down that *ancient way*,
At the lone House of God* to meet and pray.
Such simple worship long, Old England! be
The habit of thy free-born sons to pay;—
Truth in thine hand, oh, never bend the knee
To Superstition's rites, her pomp, or pageantry.

III.

And there her votaries dwelt, in olden time,
Where yonder tower† upriseth lone and gray,
O'er the rich vale[2]—rear'd by remorse for crime,
When Becket slain before God's altar lay.
Now o'er those chambers hovereth pale decay;
And rustic sounds are heard, where hymns before
Breath'd forth at closing eve and dawn of day;
While the deep vesper-bell resounds no more
Across the lonely sands of Severn's echoing shore.

* Kewstoke Church. † Woodspring Priory.

Digitized by Google

IV.

Then came we to that promontory's height—
The passing pilot knows it—"Anchor-head;"[3]
Where still its lonely rampart meets the sight—
O'er which the wings of time in vain have spread—
That erst resounded to the warrior's tread:
While from its brow, embay'd on either hand,
In silent gaze the raptur'd eye is led
To where the Channel-waters wide expand
Along the shores that bound Glamorgan's mountain land.

V.

How, gently breathing, slumbers Ocean now!
Like sleeping Beauty, smiling in a dream,
Without a trace of treachery on her brow—
So doth that dangerous deep in semblance seem
Before the bright gaze of the morning's beam.
Alas! 'tis hard our devious course to guide
Mid rocks and shoals, when mostly safe we deem
The stream of pleasure or the trackless tide—
Beneath the fairest forms, oft darkest dangers hide.

Digitized by Google

VI.

'Twas such a calm as this—the sun's last smile
Had slowly faded o'er the western sea;
When from Bristowa's port, for Erin's Isle,
Down, with the favouring current, floated free
A gallant vessel,* with her company.
And genial was the hour, and mirth was there,—
None dreamt of danger in their thoughtless glee;
But welcom'd joyaunce loud, and banish'd care—
Alas! how soon to change for shrieks of wild despair!

VII.

And Night came on, with all her starry train,
And still that doom'd ship glided proudly by;
Until between the Flat Holm and the main—
Where the grim Wolves below the surface lie—
Up to the welkin went one fearful cry!
As hard upon the rocks around she swung:—
Then rose the flood within her, fast and high;
And in mid air their signal-lights were flung,
While with the alarum-gun Penarth's wild echoes rung.

* The "William and Mary," Dublin Packet, 1817.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

The signals blaze—loud booms the gun in vain—
No help comes nigh to succour or to save;
But on them still the rushing waters gain,
'Till effort sinks beneath the closing wave:—
Then woman shrieks, and silent stand the brave,
While cowards seek the bowl, their fears to kill;
Some join in prayer, and some with madness rave,
As settles down that fated bark—until
Slow to the deep she sinks, and all around is still.

IX.

Then sullenly the tide flow'd reckless o'er
That silent spot—and the stars look'd serene*
Upon the closing wave, where, just before,
Souls on eternity's dread brink were seen—
As there nor death nor woe had ever been!
But hearts in Albion soon were heard to sigh,
While cheeks grew pale mid Erin's valleys green;
And still the seaman, as he passeth nigh,
Points to those fatal rocks, where that doom'd bark doth lie.

* "The alien shine of unconcerning stars."—COLERIDGE.

Digitized by Google

X.

On yonder Isle full pleasant 'tis to spend
The sunny hours that gild a summer's day,[5]
Till dewy eve, when its lone tower doth send
Across the wave its solitary ray,
The mariner to guide upon his way:—
And there the weary heart methinks might be
Not unrejoic'd with quietude to stay;
As holy men of old were wont to flee
To such secluded scenes, for peace and privacy.

XI.

And such was he* who, born mid evil days,
Upon its welcome shore for refuge went;
Passing his time in labour, prayer, and praise:—
While to the *steeper* Holm sage Gildas† bent
His course; upon its barren rock content
To live, where one fair flower alone doth smile;‡
And there his studious hours would he have spent,
But rude men forced him from that lonely Isle,
To seek asylum mid fam'd Glaston's sacred pile.

* St. Cadoc. † Gildas Bardonicus. ‡ The Single Peony.

Digitized by Google

XII.

And thither, bidding her lov'd land farewell!
Fair Githa, from the grasp of cruel foes—
When Saxon Harold by the Norman fell—
Sought on its sea-girt steep a brief repose,
And, with her own, wept o'er her Country's woes.
Stern Isle! to thee the crime-stain'd man would roam,
And, could'st thou tell, what tales might'st thou disclose!
Secure amid thy cliffs and surges' foam,
Thou wert by turn the Saint's—the roving pirate's home.[6]

XIII.

I would not quit this lonely height, nor breathe
For them who perish'd near a parting sigh;[7]
Though he, who sorrowed most, did fondly wreathe
A garland for the dead, that will not die![*]
Still would I pass not unregardful by,
Without the "meed of one melodious" line;
If haply some, who chance to wander nigh
These rock-resounding shores, their ear incline
To listen to the lay of harp so poor as mine.

* "The Brothers: A Monody." By C. A. Elton.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

They were two gentle youths, and brothers—here
They came, with one who was their friend and guide;
And they were link'd in Love's sweet bands, and dear
To him who view'd them with a parent's pride,
And seldom left they that protector's side;—
But, still together, sought the hills, the shore,
Together fearless would the wave divide;
Earth's fairest scenes with pious joy explore,
And in His glorious works their first Great Cause adore.

XV.

And thus those fair Boys rambled to that rock,*
Which at the tide's low ebb doth join the land;
But at the flood the rushing surges lock
In their wild arms—and, torrent-like expand
Tumultuous o'er the intermediate strand.
And there they sought those things, by Nature thrown
In secret places from her cunning hand;—
Lingering to gather shell, or weed, or stone,
Till lo! the waters came—and they were left alone.

* Birn-Rock, or Islet.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

Upon that Isle 'twere safety to remain,
Until the reflux of the constant tide;
But their lov'd home impatient to regain,
To cross the foaming Beck those Brothers tried,
And boldly, but in vain, the flood defied:—
When, turning back, the elder sought to save
The younger Boy, swept sudden from his side—
Till struggling bravely with the furious wave,
Grasp'd in Love's last embrace, they found their weltering grave.

XVII.

Too late to rescue, there the Father stood
Mute in the solemn sadness of despair!
Gazing upon the wide unconscious flood—
But saw no trace of those he looked for there.
In that dread moment, ocean, earth, and air,
Seem'd one drear blank, that none alas! might fill;
Or from that heart its sudden sorrow tear,
But He who mingleth mercy with His will,
And to the whelming waves of woe, says "Peace—be still!"

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

Bright smil'd the sun upon fair Weston now,
And the glad waters danc'd around her bay,[8]
As from that storm-bleach'd promontory's brow,
Across its spreading sands we bent our way.
There met the old and young, the grave and gay,
To breathe the bland air, or embrace the tide;
While some were basking in the genial ray,
And some were sauntering by the water's side—
So lightly seem'd the hours o'er Pleasure's paths to glide!

XIX.

Then, came within our view that distant tower,
Where ancient Banwell's cavern'd relics lie;[9]
Hidden, they say, until some recent hour,
Since the old world renew'd its infancy!
Ask how they came there—who shall make reply?
When wise men differ, and when few agree;
While hoary Time proud Science doth defy
To solve the dark enigma—all we see,
Leave it a wonder, and a solemn mystery.

Digitized by Google

XX.

Yet there hath been a day, when o'er these plains
The palm-tree rose, and waved the light bamboo;
While on those hills, where pastoral beauty reigns,
And flocks are numerous, and woods are few,
The broad interminable forest grew.
Then couch'd the fierce hyena in his den,
While prowling tigers track'd the nightly dew;
The rude rhinoceros stalk'd through each fen,
And roam'd the elephant, before the feet of men!

XXI.

But *he* hath sung them, in sweet solemn strain—
The venerable Bard,* who mus'd on "Days
Departed,"[10] with their visionary train,
That freshly live in his enduring lays.
With Memory by his side, again he strays,
Where as a Child he wander'd, on this shore;
Nor blame if, sighing, thus his voice he raise—
"Return, O days of youth! come as of yore"—
'Twas but a passing thought—an echo—and no more.

* The Rev. W. L. Bowles. See his "Days Departed," or Banwell Hill. A Poem.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

There stands that modest mansion,* as it stood
When erst the dwelling of his reverend sire;
With its fair garden, back'd by sheltering wood,
Such as might fill a humble heart's desire.
And here, amid these scenes, the slumbering fire
First kindled in the future Poet's soul;
Until the sweet sounds of his pensive lyre†
Into all true hearts, like a spirit, stole,
That, with some secret power, our being doth control.

XXIII.

Slow pacing over Bleadon's verdant brow,
Lo! Brent's broad vale beyond all smiling lay;
While at his feet the sluggish Axe doth flow,[11]
Though swift and bright he danceth into day
From his dim cave, blithe singing by the way.
So leaves some youthful spirit, pure and free,
His native roof, o'er life's rough paths to stray;
Till, like that turbid stream towards the sea,
Dark and polluted all, his future course may be.

* The Parsonage House at Uphill, where the Poet spent his childhood and early youth.

† Alluding to Bowles's Sonnets, which were very popular in their day.

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

Thus mus'd and moraliz'd the wanderer, while
Across that spreading moor he lonely strode;—
An image drawn from Nature may beguile
Somewhat the distance of the dreariest road;
While song hath power to lighten still the load,
That weary life, on earth, is doom'd to bear;—
Be mine the privilege to look abroad,
And in the gladness of Creation share;—
To wiser men I leave for worldlier things to care.

XXV.

Far over Brugia's* bay, with front sublime,
"The sea-ward Quantock stands"—while far and wide—
Like the lone desert of an eastern clime—
Those dreary sands outspread, that treacherous hide
Dangers that lurk beneath the flowing tide.
Then welcome shines yon column's† cheering star,[12]
Throughout the darkening night, frail Barks to guide;
With joy the seaman hails it from afar,
The Gore's‡ dread shoals to shun, and bear him o'er the bar.

* Bridgwater. † Burnham Lighthouse. ‡ An extensive and dangerous sand-bank off Burnham.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

Nature—fair mother of all fairest forms—
Plants beauty even on a barren strand;[13]
And throws her colours over clouds and storms,
Upon the dreariest as the lovliest land.
Lo! on those hillocks, spread on either hand—
Where nought to charm the eye may seem to rest—
The bright bee-orchis blooms upon the sand,
And 'mid the rush the skylark makes her nest;
While sings her mate among the spirits of the blest!

XXVII.

'Tis pleasant, on a summer's day, to roam
O'er Burnham's spreading shore, all wild and free,[14]
And feel the breezes, as they freshly come
Bounding and breathing from the Severn sea.
And hither Town or City folk may flee,
And view unveil'd the Sun's inspiring face;
With winds and waves hold joyous company,
In pensive mood with Meditation pace,
Or join young Liberty, unfettered in the race.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

Along the low banks of the sullen Brue,*
Our pathway led, by fertile moor and mead;
Where, far-expanding as the eye may view,—
Till Mindep's lengthening line of hills recede—
A hundred herds of noble cattle feed;—
Broad England doth not boast a finer soil,
Stout ox to graze, or rear the sturdier steed;
From cereal fields a more abundant spoil,
Or bolder race of men for battle or for toil.

XXIX.

Yet time hath been, when yon expansive plain,
Now verdant, form'd a broad lake's oozy bed—
Then all around confess'd monastic reign— [spread,
Whence Glaston's princely Abbot's board was
And monks, on fast-days, delicately fed.
Then to these favour'd haunts the cygnet came,
The heron round its shore was seen to tread;
While, art-decoy'd, the wild fowl sought the tame,—
Where now a village bears that lone Mere's ancient name.

* The Brue rises on the border of Wilts, and flowing by Bruton and Glastonbury, falls into the Parret, a little way above Burnham.

Digitized by Google

XXX.

Then Sharpham's mansion, "bosom'd high" in trees,
Mid park-like pastures, opens to the sight;—
While, not unmov'd, the pilgrim, pausing, sees
The spot were first our Fielding saw the light:—[15]
Painter of men and manners—his the might
That Age, in living colours, to pourtray;—
Yet the sage Moralist* was haply right,
Who deem'd th' alluring page might well betray;
And from the wiser path young Passion lead astray.

XXXI.

Now from the crest of Wearyall's steep hill,
Burst Glaston[16] on my view! Her ruins gray
Were sleeping in the sunshine, lone and still,
That seem'd to throw a halo o'er decay!
And fane and tower were glowing in its ray,
That now declining left the sacred ground;
And, slowly lingering, for a moment lay,
Where Mindep's purpled heights the broad vale bound;
So looks the emerald dark, with sapphires set around.

* Dr. Johnson.

Digitized by Google

XXXII.

Far different was the view, when o'er its land
The painted Briton roam'd, wild, fierce, and rude;
A lonely savage, or ferocious band;
Rough skins their raiment, acorns for their food.
Then wide around was seen the tidal flood,
And the green hills, that now we gaze upon
In open light, were topp'd with gloomy wood;
Until their fruitful soil the Roman won,
And call'd its favour'd site, the "Isle of Avalon."

XXXIII.

Such was the scene, when he* who hither came
To plant the Cross, upon this summit trod;
Where, first in Britain heard, the sacred name
Of Jesus sounded, as the Saviour God!
Then struck his pilgrim's staff within the sod,
As, "weary all," his brethren sat around;
When lo! as legends tell, instant the rod
Sprang up, a blooming hawthorn, from the ground,
That twice within the year its fragrance breath'd around!

* Joseph of Arimathea.

Digitized by Google

XXXIV.

And on that spot, where yon lone ruins stand,
Those twelve disciples met, in sweet accord;
And, with inspired heart and willing hand,
Built up an altar to the living Lord,
And offered prayer, and preach'd His sacred Word.
Then came, and were baptiséd, not a few,
Converted, they our only God ador'd;
While, still increasing, great their numbers grew,
'Till Truth from heaven spread, wide o'er the land, like dew!

XXXV.

Then, by Hibernia's tutelary Saint*
In after-time, the first fam'd Abbey rose;
And with it wealth, and power without restraint,
Making the mighty friends, and awing foes.
Though fire consum'd, and earth's internal throes
Its proud towers tumbled even with the dust;
Yet still again it flourish'd in repose—
'Till Providence decreed—all-wise and just—
Its fall beneath the grasp of tyranny and lust.

* St. Patrick.

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO THIRD CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 89.

Now, once more by the sea—on Worle's steep hill
We stood above that old "Pass of Saint Kew;"

Worle, or Worlebury Hill, is an isolated eminence or ridge, about three miles in length, and rises immediately above the sea shore, between the pleasant village of Worle and Weston-super-Mare. It is divided into three portions; the western part, the property of John Hugh Smyth Pigott, Esq., has been planted with firs and other forest trees; the middle is in the parish of Kewstoke, while the eastern part, towards Worle, is an open sheep-down, from which are obtained some of the most varied and beautiful marine and land views in the kingdom.

Immediately below, on the Channel side, is the village of Kewstoke. "The ancient name was Stoke, but it afterwards obtained an additional appellation from a saint who had his dwelling in the hollow of the mountain, above the village. The narrow craggy track, with full two hundred natural and artificial steps, by which he went to his daily devotions, still preserves his memory and name, being to this day called *The Pass of St. Kew.* It is now used as the churchway from the hamlet of Milton, on the opposite side of the hill, and its summit commands a most extensive prospect. Kewstoke church stands

Digitized by Google

immediately below this Pass, and retains evident traces of having been a much larger and more ornamented edifice."*— *Delin. of Som.*

NOTE II. Page 90.

And there her votaries dwelt, in olden time,
Where yonder tower upriseth lone and gray.
O'er the rich vale—

Woodspring Priory—"which was founded for regular Canons of the Order of St. Augustine, by William de Courteneye, in 1210, the twelfth year of King John. It owes its foundation to the murder of Thomas à Becket;† to the honour of whom, united with that of the Holy Trinity and of the Virgin Mary, this monastery was dedicated, its founder having been a descendant from William de Tracy, and nearly allied to the three other assassins of the Archbishop; and as all the descendants of these families became benefactors to this institution, it was richly endowed.

"The Priory ruins are in a secluded situation, well calculated for religious retirement; being sheltered from the Channel by a narrow shelf of rocks, called Swallow Cliff, having on the land side a dreary insulated flat, closed in by the high ridge of Worle Hill.

"The principal entrance to the Priory was in the west front, where still remains a wide arched gateway, with a contiguous one of smaller dimensions.

* Since the above note was written, the open portion of this beautiful hill, has, much to the annoyance of every lover of natural and picturesque beauty, been inclosed with stone walls, turning a very delightful spot into a scene of deformity, with little pecuniary profit by way of compensation.

† See Hist. of England, reign, Henry II.

Digitized by Google

"A considerable part of this building, which was, in its original state, an extensive and handsome pile, is still standing. The conventual church is almost entire, but converted into a farm house, the nave of which is the parlour and other apartments, surrounded by offices for the use of the farm; to which purpose the premises have for many years been applied. Little, as Maton observes, did the original tenants imagine, that their whole premises were one day to be occupied by a farmer; that their refectory was to be converted into a cart-house, and the church itself into a cellar.

"Modern windows have been substituted for the original ones, of which there were three with broad obtuse arches on the south side of the nave, and one of much larger dimensions at the western end, below which was an entrance doorway which formerly had crockets and fineals. On the summit of the nave walls is an open parapet, pierced with quatrefoils, and at the western angles are octagonal towers, terminated by embattled turrets, the panels of which are also pierced with quatrefoils.

"At the eastern end is the tower, a handsome structure sixty-five feet in height, the walls of which are in excellent preservation, and partially clothed with ivy. It is divided into three portions, and is supported by diagonal-set buttresses, terminating below the parapet in crockets and fineals. The upper story is pierced with four large excellent windows of three lights, and a transom with trefoiled head. The tower was originally surmounted by a pierced parapet, with ornamented pinnacles at the angles, and smaller ones in the centre, none of which remain. The interior has been completely extracted, and the shell of this beautiful tower left even without a roof, until the present proprietor had it leaded, to preserve it from farther decay.

"On the north side of the nave was a chapel, in which, on one of the pillars which support the tower, was a cherub holding a shield, whereon was sculptured a chevron between three bugle-horns; and on the opposite wall was another shield

Digitized by Google

sustained in a similar manner, and charged with a heart between hands and feet pierced with nails, the usual emblems of the crucifixion. The cloisters were on the south side of the church, but only the outer walls are now standing, the area being converted into a garden; at the south-east angle of which stands the friar's hall or refectory, an elegant structure, forty-four feet long by twenty feet in width, the wall and roof of which remain tolerably entire. It was lighted by well formed equilateral arched windows of two lights, with cinque-foiled heads, and transomed with good tracery of the earliest perpendicular era filling the head of the arch. The roof is lofty, and is formed of oak ribs open to the tiling, with arched principals springing from ornamental corbels below the cornice. On the south side are the ruins of a low round tower, built so as to project on the outside of the wall, the summit of which formed a sort of raised gallery or pulpit.

At a short distance on the north-west side is the monastic barn or grange, a long and lofty cruciform pile, built in the most substantial manner, with massive buttresses, which, together with the windows and door frames, are of freestone, and evidently wrought with much care. On the south-west of the Priory are the remains of extensive fish ponds, which supplied the Prior's table with carp and other fresh-water fish.

The buildings which are now remaining occupy a large space of ground, but the Priory house and the several offices, as they originally stood, extended much farther, their foundations being spread over the adjoining orchard and field to a considerable distance. Notwithstanding this extent of the premises, the utmost number of the regular Canons resident in the Convent does not appear to have amounted to more than ten at any period, though the lay brethren and servants were probably much more numerous."—*Delin. of Som.*

"It is singular to observe the extraordinary influence of the ecclesiastics in those times, contrasted with the weakness of the laws, not only over the actual perpetrators of crime, but even on their descendants, as exemplified in the present instance;

Digitized by Google

the object of this, as in most other cases, being the acquisition of wealth. Hume has the following observations:—"Among their other inventions to obtain money, the clergy had inculcated the necessity of penance as an atonement for sin; and having again introduced the practice of paying them large sums as a commutation, or species of atonement for the remission of those penances, the sins of the people, by these means, had become a revenue to the priests; and the king computed, that by this invention alone they levied more money upon his subjects than flowed, by all the funds and taxes, into the royal exchequer.

* * * * * *

"The clergy and the laity were, during that age, in a strange situation with regard to each other, and such as may seem totally incompatible with a civilized, and indeed with any species of government. If a clergyman were guilty of murder, he could be punished by degradation only: if he were murdered, the murderer was exposed to nothing but excommunication and ecclesiastical censures; and the crime was atoned for by penances and submission. Hence the assassins of Thomas à Becket himself, though guilty of the most atrocious wickedness, and the most repugnant to the sentiments of that age, lived securely in their own houses, without being called to account by Henry himself, who was so much concerned, both in honour and interest, to punish that crime, and who professed, or affected on all occasions, the most extreme abhorrence of it. It was not till they found their presence shunned by every one as excommunicated persons, that they were induced to take a journey to Rome, to throw themselves at the feet of the pontiff, and to submit to the penances imposed upon them: after which they continued to possess, without molestation, their honours and fortunes, and seem even to have recovered the countenance and good opinion of the public."*—*Hume's Hist. of Eng., Henry II.*

* These interesting monastic remains are almost contiguous to the Severn Sea, about three miles from Weston-super-Mare, which form a delightful excursion from that place.

Digitized by Google

NOTE III. Page 91.

Then came we to that promontory's height—
The passing pilot knows it—"Anchor-head;"

"'Anchor-head" is a bold headland, or precipitous rock towards the sea, being the western end of Worle Hill, and immediately adjoining the town of Weston-super-Mare. On its summit is an ancient and extensive encampment, or place of defence, formed of several entrenchments, with parapets of loose stones.

"This fortress is certainly of an extraordinary kind, and if the Danes ever constructed such places, it might well be supposed that this was a Danish camp; for the Danes much harassed the shores of the Bristol Channel in the ninth and tenth centuries; but it is much doubted whether the roving banditti, who were called by the general name of Danes, formed any of those fortresses, which are so common on the hills of England and Wales. That they occupied this, and others in the same neighbourhood, at the period above mentioned, there can be little reason to doubt; but the original formation belongs to the Britons. Some chieftain of the Hædui seems to have employed the whole strength of his clan in fortifying this retreat for himself, his subjects, and their cattle, against the invasion of their enemies, by sea or land; and here he might have dwelt occasionally with some of the principal of his dependant neighbours.

"Some time in the reign of Alfred, the Danes landed near Brent, in Somersetshire, but were put to flight by him; great numbers were drowned or slain, whilst others escaped and fled to Worle Hill, where they fortified themselves for a time."—
Seyer's Bristol.

"This remarkable fortification was occupied, and probably enlarged and strengthened by the Romans, as one of their

Digitized by Google

Castra Æstiva, or summer camps; and it is supposed to have been their last retreat in this western district: if not the strongest, it certainly was the most convenient they possessed in all these parts for surveying the motions of the enemy; and, most probably, was held by them in connexion with their station on Uphill, and their corresponding stronghold on Brean Down."

Rutter's Delin.

NOTE IV. Page 92.

When from Bristowa's port, for Erin's Isle,
Down, with the favouring current, floated free
A gallant vessel, with her company.

The "William and Mary," Bristol and Dublin Packet, was lost by striking on the "Wolves," a group of sunken rocks to the north of the Flat Holm, in 1817, when all on board, including several passengers, with the exception of one man, perished. Those who are old enough will remember the extraordinary sensation the wreck of this vessel produced at the time, in Bristol and Dublin.

It was a fine star-lit night. There were several of what are termed "first-class" passengers on board; and it was reported by the sole survivor, that music, dancing, and merry-making were going on, when the vessel struck. This may, perhaps, account for the negligence or ignorance of the master or pilot as to the ship's position.

Digitized by Google

NOTE V. Page 94.

On yonder Isle full pleasant 'tis to spend
The sunny hours that gild a summer's day,

"The Flat Holm (or Island) is about a mile and a half in circumference, with a good farm house and inn, nearly in the centre, surrounded by a dairy-farm of sixty acres, the land bearing good crops, and abounding with burnet, wild thyme, and other aromatic plants. The Flat Holm is a favourite place of resort in summer, being in itself pleasing, and commanding a delightful prospect of the Bristol Channel, and of the coast on each side, for more than sixty miles in length. The inn affords good accommodation, and is occasionally honoured by a visit from the corporation of Bristol, who combine an agreeable aquatic excursion from the City, with the exercise of their judicial rights, which extend as far into the Channel as this island.

"There is good bathing upon the pebbly beach, which at low water extends round the island, strewed with fragments of rock that have fallen from the cliffs, covered with whilks and limpets, and the common kelp-weed, which is in great abundance in the little pools of water; great numbers of sea anemonies, of different kinds, are left by the falling of the tide on the beach, and on the south side are found large tubulated ones, which, when open, are six inches in diameter. In some places also the green and brown confervæ are met with. Also many species of fuci, and some of the coralline or serpularia.

"On the highest point of this island is a lighthouse, eighty feet in height, standing within fifty yards of the south-east edge of the cliffs; and having been, within these few years, fitted up as a revolving light, it presents a pleasing object in the evening from Weston, twinkling like a star, at the interval of a few seconds."—*Rutter's Delin.*

It is a delightful sail from Weston to the Flat Holm in fine

Digitized by Google

weather; the distance being about eight miles. We enjoyed the trip much, with a friend or two, a few years since, returning with the evening tide. But the uncertainty of the weather, and other contingencies in this narrow sea, sometimes make the period of return somewhat precarious, and the visitor may be detained there much longer than may be agreeable. The steam-boat, however, which runs from Bristol to Portishead daily, frequently extends her course to this island during the summer months, affording an excellent opportunity to many parties from those places, and the certainty of return on the same day. The scenery down the Avon, and afterward on the estuary of the Severn, of the coasts of Somerset, Monmouthshire, and Glamorgan, is of the first order.

NOTE VI. PAGE 95.

Secure amid thy cliffs and surges' foam,
Thou wert by turn the Saint's—the roving pirate's home.

About three miles to the south-east of the Flat is the Steep Holm, "whose summit rises four hundred feet above the level of the Channel. It is a rock of about a mile and a half in circumference, and in many places overhangs the water; it is inaccessible, except by two narrow passages, very difficult of access, rising from the small pebbly beach on its north-eastern and south-western sides. The summit is of a sandy unfruitful soil, bearing little grass or any other vegetables, except those which seem peculiar to such situations. The single peony is indigenous upon the rock, and there is considerable quantity of privet, ivy, and some elder.

"A few rabbits continue to exist on the rock. The vast number of sea-birds that resort to the ledges and crevices of the

Digitized by Google

rocks for the purpose of incubation, afford amusement to the fowler; the eggs being sometimes collected as a source of profit.

"On the summit of this solitary island, a small tenement was erected in the year 1776, for the convenience of the fishermen, who, on attending their nets pitched here, have been detained for several days in tempestuous weather. It is the point of division between the counties of Somerset, Gloucester, and Bristol; and upon it, one of its former possessors, Maurice, the third Lord Berkeley, built a small endowed priory in 1320, but no remains of it are now visible."

Githa, the mother of Harold, retired to this rude rock for security, after the fatal battle of Hastings.—*See Leland's Itin.*

NOTE VII. Page 95.

I would not quit this lonely height, nor breathe
For them who perish'd near, a parting sigh;

This spot will long retain a melancholy interest from the loss, in the autumn of 1819, of two promising youths, sons of the late Sir Charles A. Elton, Bart., of Clevedon Court.

Just opposite the bold promontory of Anchor-head is a low detached rock, which, at the flow of the tide through a narrow channel called Birn-beck, becomes an island; but to which, at low water, there is an easy communication from the main land. It was in the endeavour to cross this isthmus, when surprised by the rapid advance of the tide, that those amiable boys met their untimely fate. The bodies were found

"Unspotted and unbroken, where the sea
Beats Cambria's cliff, that in the sunlight gleams
Full opposite that sea-side tower, which tops
The verdant hill: their grave and monument.*"

The Brothers; A Monody.

* Clevedon Old Church.

Digitized by Google

NOTE VIII. Page 98.

Bright smil'd the sun upon fair Weston now,
And the glad waters danc'd around her bay,

"It is only since the beginning of the present century that this favoured locality has risen in the estimation of the public—at first slowly; indeed it was not then so much the fashion for families to migrate at certain seasons to watering-places, but since this has become a necessity, a part of the yearly prospectus, the increase of Weston has been unprecedented; and instead of a few fishermen's huts, it now contains from four to five hundred houses, and many elegant mansions. Its smooth and extensive sand beach, the salubrity of the air, the beauty of the surrounding scenery, and the facility of communication, now established by means of the railway, with Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, and Bridgwater, are advantages too important to be overlooked, and that they are appreciated is evident, from the yearly increase in the number of its visitors, and in the general air and sign of its growing prosperity which meet us at every step, and foretell its eventual gradation."—*The Visitor's Companion in rambling about Weston.*

Since the above was written Weston has been greatly enlarged in its buildings and population, and has become a town of considerable resort as a watering-place.—See Bedell's Guide to Weston-super-Mare.

NOTE IX. Page 98.

Then, came within our view that distant tower,
Where ancient Banwell's cavern'd relics lie;

The Author spent a short November day, many years since, at the Cottage of the late venerable Dr. Law, Bishop of Bath

Digitized by Google

and Wells, on Banwell Hill; but owing to his professional engagements there, and his Lordship's kind hospitality, he had not time to explore the caves. He avails himself therefore of the "Banwell and Cheddar Guide" for the following extracts:

"About a mile from Locking (on the road from Weston-super-Mare), at a little hamlet called Knightcott, we turn to the right, and gradually ascend the western extremity of Wint, or Banwell Hill, which rises immediately above the village, until we draw up before a semi-circular arch of considerable span, composed of rough stones, with the soffit diversified with black and white pebbles. This is the entrance to the caves, for which Banwell has obtained its celebrity, and also to the Cottage built in 1827, by the late Bishop of Bath and Wells, who purchased the manor, and afterwards enlarged and adopted the Cottage as a permanent residence, where he ended his days, in September, 1845. Through the arch the eye perceives the druidical circle and trilithon, broad surfaces of turf, and clustered flowers, and young plantations, with a variety of tasteful and fancy structures. Upon the summit of the hill, which is nearly half a mile in length, and abounds with ochre, calamine, and lead, has been erected a tower sixty feet high, which forms a conspicuous landmark to all the country round, and is generally known as the "Bishop's tower." We need not ascend its elevation for a delightful and commanding prospect; the view from the hill beneath being sufficiently extensive.

"To Mr. Wm. Beard's intelligence, zeal, and perseverance, the public are indebted for the very interesting discoveries contained in the bone cavern. Mr. Beard remembered having heard when a child, that about thirty years before, an immense cavern had been discovered in the north-western extremity of the hill, and being directed to the supposed entrance, sunk a shaft to the depth of one hundred feet, and came to the first landing-place of the cave, where were two pieces of candles, having the appearance of stalactites, which had evidently been left by the parties who had preceded in the discovery, a sufficient

Digitized by Google

time to become encrusted with a slight coating of lime. It was in improving the access to this, which is distinguished as the stalactite cave, that the smaller or bone cavern was discovered. When opened it was nearly full of an immense quantity of bones, blended with sand and loose stones, most of the living species of the various animals to which the bones had belonged, being extinct in England. * * * We descend by some stone steps about thirty feet into the cavern, which is irregular, and consists of two apartments, with the bones arranged at the sides, or otherwise heaped in various masses: two piles are disposed as pillars, apparently supporting the roof, and some are suffered to remain in their original state, mingled with rubbish. The most interesting specimens were prudently removed by Mr. Beard to his cottage, about half a mile distant, on the south side of the hill, where they are scrupulously preserved, and submitted at all times to the inspection of numerous visitors by the worthy proprietor. It will naturally be inquired how so vast a quantity of animal remains accumulated in so small a place? Amongst the numerous theories which have arisen, none, perhaps, fully satisfy the mind; there is, however, one solution of the inexplicable phenomena derived from such plain and simple reasoning upon absolute appearances, that if it do not convince, it will at least direct the thoughts of the visitor to the wide field of inquiry before him. It is entitled 'Thoughts on the appearances presented by Banwell Cave,' in a letter, dated August 11th, 1828, to the Rev. Wm. Lisle Bowles, by the Rev. R. Warner, and is appended to Mr. Bowles's poem of 'Days Departed, or Banwell Hill.' We extract only that portion immediately bearing upon the subject:

"'The sagacity of Mr. Beard having detected the existence of the cavern, and his perseverance effected a precipitous descent into it; the objects offered to his notice were of the most astonishing and paradoxical description—an 'antre vast,' rude from the hand of nature, of various elevations, and branching into several recesses; its floor overspread with a huge mingled

Digitized by Google

mass of bones and mud, black earth, (or decomposed animal matter), and sand from the Severn Sea, which flows about six miles to the northward of Banwell village. The quantity of bones, and the mode by which they could be conveyed to, and deposited in, the place they occupied, were points of equal difficulty to be explained: as the former amounted to several waggon-loads; and as no access to the cavern appeared to exist, except a fissure from above, utterly incapable, from its narrow dimensions, of admitting the falling in of any animal larger than a common sheep; whereas, it was evident, that huge quadrupeds, such as unknown beasts of the ox tribe, bears, wolves, and probably hyænas and tigers, had perished in the cave. But, though the questions how and when were unanswerable, this conclusion was irresistibly formed upon the mind, by the phenomena submitted to the eye,—that, as the receptacle was infinitely too small to contain such a crowd of animals in their living state, they must necessarily have occupied it in succession: one portion of them after another paying the debt of nature, and (leaving their bones only, as a memorial of their existence on the spot) thus making room in the cavern for a succeeding set of inhabitants, of similar ferocious habits to themselves. The difficulty, indeed, of the ingress of such beasts into the cave did not long continue to be invincible; as Mr. Beard discovered, and cleared out, a lateral aperture in it, sufficiently inclining from the perpendicular, and sufficiently large in its dimensions, to admit of the easy descent into this subterraneous apartment of one of its most unwieldly tenants, though loaded with its prey.

"'From the circumstances premised, you will, probably, anticipate my thoughts on these remarkable phenomena; if not, they are as follow:—I consider the cavern to have been formed at the period of the original deposition, and consolidation, of the matter constituting the mountain lime-stone in which it is found; possibly, by the agency of some elastic gas, imprisoned in the mass, which prevented the approximation of

Digitized by Google

its particles; or, by some unaccountable interruption to the operation of the usual laws of its crystallisation,—that, for a long succession of ages anterior to the deluge, and previously to man's inhabiting the colder regions of the earth, Banwell Cave had been inhabited by successive generations of beasts of prey; which, as hunger dictated, issued from their den, pursued, and slaughtered, the gregarious animals, or wilder quadrupeds, in its neighbourhood; and dragged them, either bodily or piecemeal, to this retreat, in order to feast upon them at leisure, and undisturbed—that the bottom of the cavern thus became a kind of charnel-house, of various and unnumbered beasts,—that this scene of excursive carnage continued till 'the flood came and destroyed them all;' blending the 'oppressor with the oppressed,' and mixing the hideous furniture of the den with a quantity of extraneous matter, brought from the adjoining shore, and subjacent lands, by the waters of the deluge, which rolled, surging (as Kirwan imagines) from the north-western quarter,—that, previously to this total submersion, as the flood increased on the lower grounds, the animals which fed upon them ascended the heights of Mendip, to escape impending death; and, with panic, rushed (as many as could gain entrance) into this dwelling-place of their worst enemies,—that, numberless birds also, terrified by the elemental tumult, flew into the same den, as a place of temporary refuge,—that the interior of the cavern was speedily filled by the roaring deluge, whose waters, dashing and crushing the various substances which they embraced, against the rugged rocks, or against each other; and continuing this violent and incessant action for at least three months, at length tore asunder every connected form; separated every skeleton; and produced that confusion of substances, that scene of *disjecta membra*, that mixture and disjunction of bones which were apparent on the first inspection of the cavern, and which are now visible in that part of it, which has been hitherto untouched.'

"A writer in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for November,

Digitized by Google

1837, who signs himself 'Viator,' and cites the foregoing extract, does not consider that 'a reasoning mind can be satisfied with any of the present theories to account for these phenomena,' and, he continues, 'if it be as humble as it is thoughtful, it will see the wisdom of the poet's advice, and

'Wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore.'

"We give his observations as immediately bearing upon the exciting theme, which engrosses the attention and bewilders the speculations of the visitor:—

"'One conclusion to be drawn from these inexplicable bone caverns, seems, however, to be inevitable, that at the period when the formidable animals (whose osseous remains we are now considering) were in a living state, exercising their vast powers, and ranging through unbounded space; when (as Lord Brougham eloquently remarks) 'the waste gave resting-place to enormous beasts, like lions, and elephants, and river horses, while the water was tenanted by lizards the size of a whale, sixty or seventy feet long, and by others, with huge eyes, having shields of solid bone to protect them, and glaring from necks ten feet in length; and the air was darkened by flying reptiles covered with scales, opening the jaws of the crocodile, and expanding wings armed at the tips with the claws of the leopard;' when such, I repeat, was the state and appearance of land, sea, and air, it is obvious, I think, that man could not *then* be an inhabitant of earth.

"It is true, indeed, that his Lordship's animated sketch refers more especially to the fossil remains of animals, and to the condition of our 'terrestrial ball' when these terrible forms were its tenants; but the representation applies in part to the state of the natural world, when the face of the globe was peopled by those gigantic forms, whose recrements appear in the Banwell and other bone caverns. With these, also, man could not be a co-dweller upon the earth's surface. Ignorant of the arts of defence which civilisation teaches, and of the power resulting

Digitized by Google

from combination, he would have been no match for such formidable ferine rivals; nor able, for any length of time, to maintain a dispute with them, either for his own preservation, or for the means of his sustenance, or for a 'local habitation.' May we not rather venture to suppose, that these inferior natures had a being upon earth before the formation of man, when as yet it was unfit for his residence? Would it be presumptuous to contemplate the great and good author of universal being, as proceeding, step by step, as it were; or, in other words, by successive creations, in preparing 'this vast terrene' for the inhabitation of the 'reasonable soul?' In giving existence and happiness to various orders of animals, from the zoophite to the 'half-reasoning elephant,' which having had their allotted period of sensation and enjoyment, on a surface exactly adapted to their several exigencies, should disappear from the gradually maturing and improving earth, until it became duly prepared, to minister to the wants, and pleasures and safety, of that intellectual creature, who was destined not only to 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle,' but (if he properly availed himself of his vast advantages) to survive the ruin of his present habitation, and enjoy a more exalted state of being, 'in a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

"The stalactite cavern is the next object of interest to which we proceed; it is the deeper of the two, and is above the cottage; but the entrance is not so accommodating and facile as that of the other, having, after passing an arched passage of a few feet, to descend by two ladders of twenty feet each, the first resting on a landing-place not remarkable for its width. At the end of the second we have room to slide over some slippery steps in a descent of about one hundred feet, when we find ourselves in a vaulted apartment of considerable dimensions, one hundred and fifty feet deep, thirty-five high, and sixty broad—the effect of the whole when lighted up—the irregular masses of the rock —the broad shadows—the deep recesses—the strong relief of

Digitized by Google

the lurid lights—the huge fragments which have fallen from the roof, and assumed all forms that imagination creates of the hideous and unreal, as they loom through the darkness—have a grandeur and sublimity which cannot fail to impress the most indifferent observer with ideas of the omnipotence of God, who, far from the ways of mankind, has left these records of His wondrous works. From its aperture to its termination, the concavity stretches and descends for three hundred feet; at the bottom is a rough seat formed of a large mass of stalagmite, and is called the 'Bishop's Chair,' in commemoration of the deceased prelate, by whom it was first applied to its present use. It has a circular back, and bears a somewhat crude resemblance to the ancient chair in Winchester cathedral.

"Though this chair be somewhat of the coolest and dampest, yet it is usual to seat oneself here, and look towards the descent we have made, when the magnificence of the whole subterraneous palace is fully developed: the lofty arched roof, the semi-transparent stalactites, the row of lights on each side, which illume the slippery steps to the second descent, giving an idea of the distance we have penetrated, and the shadowy cavities and deep hollows have a magical and picturesque charm we have seldom seen surpassed. The stalagmite incrustations, which cover the floor, are numerous, and various stalactites are pointed out as remarkable for their peculiar formation; one is said to resemble a lion, another the upper jaw of an alligator, and other objects, dependent for their similitude on the fancy and good nature of the visitor."

Digitized by Google

NOTE X. Page 99.

But he *hath sung them, in sweet solemn strain—*
The venerable Bard, who mus'd on "Days Departed,"

"Breathes not the man with a more poetical temperament than Bowles. No wonder that his old eyes* are still so lustrous; for they possess the sacred gift of beautifying creation, by shedding over it the charm of melancholy. 'Pleasant but mournful to the soul is the memory of joys that are past'—is the text we should choose were we about to preach on his genius. No vain repinings, no idle regrets, does his spirit now breathe over the still receding past. But time-sanctified are all the shows that arise before his pensive imagination; and the common light of day, once gone, in his poetry seems to shine as if it had all been dying sunset or moonlight, or the new-born dawn. His human sensibilities are so fine as to be in themselves poetical; and his poetical aspirations so delicate as to be felt always human. Hence his sonnets have been dear to poets—having in them 'more than meets the ear'—spiritual breathings that hang around the words like light around fair flowers; and hence, too, have they been beloved by all natural hearts who, having not the 'faculty divine,' have yet the 'vision'—that is, the power of seeing and of hearing the sights and the sounds which genius alone can awaken, bringing them from afar out of the dust and dimness of evanishment."

(Query.) "*Recreations of Christopher North.*"
Blackwood's Mag.

* It is sometime since the Author transcribed the above passage—those eyes have long since been closed to this world for ever.

Digitized by Google

NOTE XI. Page 100.

Slow pacing over Bleadon's verdant brow,
Lo! Brent's broad vale beyond all smiling lay;
While at his feet the sluggish Axe doth flow,

Bleadon hill—on the south side of which is the village of that name—is a portion of the Mindep range, near its western extremity, and commands very extensive and interesting views from its summit. A bloody battle is related to have taken place here with the Danes, who landed at Uphill from Weston bay. In their absence, their vessels, according to tradition, were cut adrift, by which they were finally discomfited, and their retreat cut off. The Axe, which runs at the base of this hill, has its principal source in a cavern, called Wokey-hole, between Axbridge and Wells, receiving a tributary from the Cheddar Cliffs, and after a short course falls into the Bristol Channel between Uphill and Brean Down.

After crossing the Axe, the tower of Lympsham, in the midst of dark elms, becomes a marked and beautiful object, rising above the broad and rich level that surrounds it. The Rectory, an elegant building, which is contiguous, with its lawn, and trees, and flowers, forms a picturesque combination with the church, &c. and is distinguished among the many delightful and secluded clerical residences scattered over the country.

Brent Knoll also, a conical eminence, and conspicuous landmark, rises beyond, and is situated in the parish of East Brent, on the shores of the Bristol Channel. "The *feoffment* of this parish was bestowed on the Abbey of Glastonbury by Ina, of monastic celebrity."

"On the top of Brent Knoll, which rises nearly one thousand feet above the level of the sea, there are the remains of a large double irregular entrenchment, in which a number of Roman

Digitized by Google

coins and weapons of war have been discovered. The west Saxons seem to have made use of this fortress in their Mercian wars, being important, not only for defence, but likewise as an alarm-post, from the extensive views it commands. Alfred is also said to have defended himself here, at one period, against the Danes. Battleborough, a small village to the south of the hill, preserves in its name the memory of some notable action."

Nightingale's Top. and Hist. Description of Somerset.

NOTE XII. Page 101.

Then welcome shines yon column's cheering star,

We are indebted to the Author of "A Guide to the neighbourhood of Weston" for the following note. "The history of the Burnham Lighthouse bears sufficient interest to induce us briefly to touch upon its leading points. The resident of a small farm-house, which formerly stood on what is now Stert Island, but then an isthmus of the main land, used to place a lanthorn in one of the windows at night to warn mariners of the dangerous coast. This beacon continued for many years to be the only guide the seaman had at this place, when the Rev. David Davies, at that time the curate of the parish, erected (in the year 1801) at a small cost, the little tower which now stands on the Davies' Villa Esplanade, and procured an act of Parliament to enable him to collect tolls from all vessels entering or departing from the Bridgwater river.

"It should be stated that the number of vessels entering the port, has increased since that time from about six hundred, to nearly three thousand, sail annually. The lighthouse having been often complained of as insufficient, the Corporation of the Trinity House were desirous of making it more extensively serviceable, and therefore entered into a treaty with the

Digitized by Google

reverend proprietor for the surrender of his vested interest in it. This they effected in the year 1829 (after some coyness on the part of the reverend gentleman, who, it must be admitted, was an excellent speculator) for no less a sum than £13,500. Subsequently they changed the site of the lighthouse, and erected the present elegant and lofty structure; and, it is worthy of remark, that since that period, no shipwreck has taken place during the night-time. The few which have unfortunately occurred happening by day in thick and tempestuous weather.

"The view from the lighthouse embraces to the north-west, over the Gore and Culver sands, the open Channel, with the Welsh hills in the distance—to the north, the Steep and Flat Holms—to the north-east and south, a rich flat moor, with the Brent Knoll as a conspicuous land-mark—and to the west, it is bounded by the lofty chain of the Quantock Hills. From the great altitude of the lighthouse, the whole appears extremely magnificent. Nor should we here omit to mention the unvarying courtesy and kindness of Mr. Campbell, the principal light keeper, who is on all occasions (Sundays excepted) ready to gratify the curiosity of strangers, by taking them to the balcony, (which is upwards of eighty feet high,) and from which the delightful prospect is obtained."

NOTE XIII. PAGE 102.

Nature—fair mother of all fairest forms—
Plants beauty even on a barren strand;

From Brean Down, which forms one of the horns of Weston Bay, to Burnham, a distance of eight or nine miles, the low coast consists, within high-water mark, of hard sand without a

Digitized by Google

pebble, bounded by innumerable hillocks, or sand-totts, as they are called, in which numbers of rabbits burrow. There is much that is singular, and to most eyes perhaps repulsive, in the aspect of this shore—to us it appears very different. Look which way you will, on the land-side, or towards the sea, there is vast extent, one of the constituents of grandeur or sublimity. To those accustomed to the confined inclosures which characterize, in general, the present cultivated state of England, it is a scene of strong contrast, and of no ordinary interest; and often when wandering alone in the grey twilight among these sandy hillocks, when the sound of the swelling tide, the wing of the burrow-duck returning to her nest, or the wailing cry of the curlew alone is heard—and nothing near you meets the eye, but a few stunted and tempest-beaten trees, looking like spectres in the loaming—we have experienced feelings which we thought would be ill exchanged for any produced by softer or gayer scenes.

Amid this sterility—where nothing beside grows but the mat-weed and tufts of rush or long coarse grass—the eye of the wanderer is delighted to observe the beautiful bee-orchis, sole flower of the desert, rising above the sand; shewing us that our good and bountiful Creator leaves no spot so desolate without some object of use, beauty, or interest, to attract our love or admiration. The utility of the humble mat-weed—which the foot of the unobservant tramples upon unheeded—is seen, by its spreading, like a vast net-work over the loose sands, which are thus prevented from being blown, during the strong sea-winds, over the adjoining lands, as well as diminishing the necessary barrier they form against the influx of the high tides. It is also favourite ground of the skylark, which breeds among the rush, and in the spring and summer months they congregate here by thousands, making the sky above one wide melody.—*D.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE XIV. Page 102.

'Tis pleasant, on a summer's day, to roam
O'er Burnham's spreading shore, all wild and free,

Burnham is situated on the northern side of Bridgwater Bay. "Its population," observes the Author of the little work before quoted, "is rapidly increasing, as the medical efficacy of the spa, and the advantages it possesses as a watering-place, are made known. The village contains a respectable and well conducted hotel, and nearly double the number of houses it did a few years since, yet the accommodations are found to be quite insufficient for the numerous visitants who resort here, during the genial and cheering months of summer and autumn. The houses are generally well built, and neat in appearance. There are both hot and cold baths, and a very neat, though small, pump-room, where, during the season, the polite and liberal proprietor places the various London and provincial newspapers, besides providing a small though well-selected library for the use of visitors." * * * "But what more particularly lends attraction to Burnham, is the number of vessels and small craft continually enlivening the River Parret, and in their passage to and from Bridgwater, spotting the surface of the Severn, and presenting always some object of interest to amuse the eye, and occupy the thought with speculation on the trackless wanderers."

The hard and broad sands extending for miles along the shore, form a delightful walk for the pedestrian, and ample space for the equestrian race.

Digitized by Google

NOTE XV. Page 104.

While, not unmov'd, the pilgrim, pausing, sees
The spot where first our Fielding saw the light:—

Sharpham Park, the birth-place of Henry Fielding, where he was born April 22nd, 1707, is about three miles from Glastonbury. For the particulars of the diversified life of the Author of the celebrated novel of "Tom Jones," we refer the reader to his Memoirs by Murphy, and others: but we cannot help inserting a characteristic letter by Hannah More, containing the opinion of Dr. Johnson on the works of Fielding.

"I never saw Johnson really angry with me but once; and his displeasure did him so much honour, that I loved him the better for it. I alluded rather flippantly, I fear, to some witty passage in 'Tom Jones:' he replied, 'I am shocked to hear you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it: a confession which no modest lady should ever make. I scarcely know a more corrupt work.' I thanked him for his correction; assured him I thought full as ill of it now as he did, and had only read it at an age when I was more subject to be caught by the wit, than able to discern the mischief. Of 'Joseph Andrews,' I declared my decided abhorrence. He went so far as to refuse to Fielding the great talents which are ascribed to him, and broke out into a noble panegyric on his competitor, Richardson; who, he said, was as superior to him in talents as in virtue; and whom he pronounced to be the greatest genius that had shed its lustre on the path of literature."

Letters of Hannah More.

Digitized by Google

NOTE XVI. Page 104.

Now from the crest of Wearyall's steep hill,
Burst Glaston on my view! Her ruins grey
Were sleeping in the sunshine, lone and still,

The Author is indebted for the following notices in illustration of his text, to a "History of Glastonbury Abbey, its Ruins, &c.," by the Rev. J. Williamson, Incumbent of Theale.

"No spot in England is more enshrined in ancient Ecclesiastical renown than Glastonbury. It was thus our ancestors spake of this hallowed locality; 'It is the first ground of God; the first ground of the Saints; the rise and fountain of all religion in Britain; the burying place of the Saints; it was here the first Church was built by the Disciples of our Lord!'

* * * * * *

"Unquestionable authorities and wide-spread traditions give a striking and romantic description of the locality of Glastonbury anterior to, and for some centuries after, the invasion of the Romans. It was then an island; an island within an island. The whole of its area abounded with woods, marshes, and bogs. So forbidding and gloomy was once this celebrated spot, that it is said to have been selected as one of the homes of the Druids, where amidst its dark groves, they lived their secluded life, and performed their mysterious ceremonies.

"The earliest known name assigned to this spot, is Yniswydryn, signifying the Isle of the Glassy Water. This poetic designation seems to have derived its origin from its surrounding waters, which reflected as in a broad mirror, God's beautiful sky.

* * * * * *

"St. Benignus, one of its earliest Abbots, is said to have changed this name into Avalonia, about A.D. 440. Various are the derivations given to this word. Some maintain that it is

Digitized by Google

derived from Aval, a British chief, to whom this Island once belonged. Others, with greater probability, assert that Aval signifies an apple, and Avalonia the Isle of Apples. The apple appears to have been brought into Britain by its earliest possessors; and especially by the Œdui, who anciently inhabited some portions of the country, now called Somerset. An old Latin author thus quaintly describes the Island;—(the translation is from Camden):—

'The Isle of Apples, truly fortunate,
Where unforced goods and willing comforts meet;
Nor there the fields require the rustic's hands,
But nature only cultivates the lands,
The fertile plains with corn and herds are proud,
And golden Apples smile in every wood.'

"When Saxon power became dominant in Britain, the name Avalonia was again transmuted into Glastonbury, signifying somewhat of its original appellation, the Saxon words ton for town, and burig, or burg, for borough being added.

"The locality of Glastonbury possesses a remarkable, bold, and varied scenery. Vast, yet pleasing, is the view that presents itself to the spectator from the elevated points around where once stood Glaston's far-famed Abbey; its circumferential line from the summit of Tor Hill exceeding 140 miles. The circlet of this interesting Isle originally included, in addition to the site of Glastonbury itself, what is now known as the Tor Hill, Weary-all Hill, and Chalice Hill. And here in ages far anterior to the birth of Christ, amidst its marshy bogs, its reeds and rushes, dwelt some of our rude ancestors.

* * * * * *

"Tradition has so linked the story of Joseph of Arimathæa with Glastonbury, that it cannot here be justifiably witheld. Monkish legends, dim though they be, like reflected moonbeams on a distant lake, declare that the Jews entertaining particular enmity against Joseph of Arimathæa, St. Philip, Lazarus,

Digitized by Google

Mary Magdalene and Martha, his sisters, with Marcella, their servant, banished them from Judæa—put them into a vessel without sails or oars,—sent them out to sea thus unprovided, intending their death by shipwreck,—and that the abysses of the watery deep should be their grave. However, the proverb was exemplified—'Man proposes, God disposes!' Driven about by wild tempest, at length they safely reached Marseilles, in France. Here Philip remained preaching the Gospel, and sent Joseph of Arimathæa, with his son Joseph, and other associates, over into Britain to convert its Pagan inhabitants. The reason why the Apostle of Gaul sent over this devoted and holy saint, who had witnessed the greatest of all earthly events—the Crucifixion—is recorded to have been a vision, revealing the dark and mournful condition of our Island; while voices, in tones of intensest earnestness cried—'Come over and help us!' Joseph resolved to fulfil this divine commission Inspiring eleven others with his own burning zeal, they sailed to Britain with the rich freight of everlasting truth—God their protector and pilot. Where this hallowed band first set foot on British soil, no ancient landmark tells, although old Chronicles maintain that some spot in Venedotia—now called North Wales—claims this high honour. On their arrival they found the country all dreary and desolate. The scattered and untaught inhabitants looked with suspicion on the unknown strangers. Day after day they travelled onward through gloomy forests and boggy swamps, till at length they halted on the mossy mound in Yniswydryn, since called Weary-all Hill,—for saith the old legends, 'weary they all were.'

"Beautifully graphic is the remaining portion of this curious tale. It was Christmas-day when they arrived in the Isle of Glassy Waters—the first ever held in England. Groups of natives that had hitherto kept aloof and watched the mysterious intruders, were now seen approaching in considerable numbers, as if to challenge the unprotected Missionaries. Whereupon Joseph, observing the uneasiness of his followers, planted his

Digitized by Google

staff—his apostolic rod—in the earth. Then uplifting his hands towards heaven, he implored blessings upon the ground of which he had thus taken possession in the name of his divine Master. When he prayed, no lightnings illumed the sky—no thunders pealed—no voice from heaven startled the Pagan crowd. All was silent awe—the sublime stillness which enshrines the Deity's profoundest workings. The man of God uprose from his knees, and behold! an astounding miracle. As in Aaron's time even so now, the dry and lifeless rod, the pilgrim staff which Joseph had brought from the Holy land, instantly budded, blossomed, filled the surrounding air with sweetest odours. Amidst the ice and snows of winter appeared the leaves and flowers of the enchanting spring. Marvelling at the miracle, the crowd, in humble adoration and amazement bowed down their heads, while Joseph with tears of gratitude exclaimed '*our God is with us! Jesus is with us!*' Forthwith the brotherhood were encouraged to work on with intenser zeal for the conversion of the natives. Amidst trials, difficulties, persecutions, they ever gazed on the standing miracle in their midst—the growing, flowering staff—the living proof that the Deity accepted and approved their disinterested labours. They felt convinced that they should

> 'after all their tribulations long,
> See golden days fruitful of golden deeds,
> With joy and love triumphing, and fair truth.'

"Arviragus was at that period the king of this portion of Britain; and the Ashmolean manuscript asserts that so successful was the enterprise, so delighted was the monarch with their doctrines and deportment, that he not only afforded them regal protection, but to each of the twelve gave a hide of land for their support—'*the twelve hides of Glastonbury.*'

* * * * * *

"The dark cloud which for a century loomed over the Isle of the Glassy Waters, at length was beautifully illumed by the

Digitized by Google

rainbow of promise. That illustrious monarch, King Arthur, whose fame has been immortalized by the noblest writers and poets of Britain, sent over to this drooping establishment, from those 'two eyes of learning, (as Fuller styles them) Bangor and Caerleon, men, the effects of whose labours will remain for ever, although the rust of antiquity may have obliterated their names.'

"King Arthur ofttimes visited Glastonbury and bestowed on its monastery many and great favours. After his fatal battle with his cruel nephew, Mordred, he was brought hither and entombed, giving splendour and renown to the Abbey's dawning greatness. Before his death it is recorded that he gave to the monastery, Brent Marsh and Poulton, with other lands to the value of 500 marks, a vast and liberal benefaction in those days.

"As the Anglo-Saxons after their invasion of Britain, unquestionably owed to this and other like brotherhoods, their conversion from Paganism to Christianity, they ever manifested towards them the profoundest attachment. The Anglo-Saxon Kings became their most liberal benefactors, and ofttimes in lowliest reverence prostrated themselves before the Heralds of the everlasting Gospel.

* * * * * *

"Amongst those interesting visits paid by royalty to this Abbey, was that of Edward I. with his Consort Eleanora, in the sixth year of his reign. He there celebrated at his own expense the feast of Easter. This royal visit was highly favourable to the affairs of the monastery. With considerable skill the Abbot maintained his supremacy. Each royal guest was received singly, and with much ecclesiastical pomp. A knight had been sent forward to prepare for the reception of this illustrious monarch. He was refused admission at the Abbey, the Abbot alleging that it would infringe the privileges of the Convent and the *twelve hides*, which absolutely forbade any Bishop, or Judge, or even Royalty, or any of their officers,

Digitized by Google

either to enter or exercise any authority within that jurisdiction without the will and consent of the Abbot. Strange as it may now appear, yet the Sovereign of England yielded, and the head of the Abbey appointed his own officer to act as Sheriff of the *twelve hides*, and fulfil all the duties of Earl Marshal. Nay more, so supreme was the Abbot, that he would not give permission to the King to hold an assize at Glastonbury; and the extraordinary spectacle was witnessed, of Britain's monarch going without the boundaries of the *twelve hides* of Glastonbury, to an adjoining village, named Street, to administer justice. Edward, instead of resenting what might now be reckoned as an indignity, continued throughout his long and brilliant career to manifest favour to this Abbey, where he had been so hospitably, yet haughtily entertained.

* * * * * *

"Extensive and valuable was the library belonging to this Abbey. During some centuries anterior to the reformation, learning was hoarded up in these religious buildings, like treasures in the coffers of some rich burgher. Neither were valuable to the community at large. What wealth of antiquity enriched the library of Glastonbury Abbey may be learned from the well-known exclamation of that profound and truthful scholar LELAND, who examined it about sixteen years before its destruction;—'No sooner,' says he, 'had I crossed the threshold of this library than the sight alone of so many ancient works struck my mind with devout astonishment; so that I even drew back amazed. Then after saluting the presiding Deity, for many days I remained very minutely examining its burdened shelves.' In addition to the many precious and beautiful manuscripts belonging to this noble library, massive volumes of the Holy Scriptures, of Christian Fathers and Casuists, of Poets and Philosophers, came from an adjoining room, called the Scriptorium, or writing chamber. Here learned monks were continuously employed in composing and transcribing. Here too, with unwearied labour they copied—in the most

Digitized by Google

beautiful and ornamental manner—missals, breviaries, antiphonalia, and other sacred books, used in the Abbey services, as well as in adjoining churches. The Scriptorium was then what now the Printing Office is to the country at large.

* * * * * *

"*The Holy Thorn!* who hath not heard of its wonders? Although the puritanical zealot who felled this time-honoured tree, boasted that he had brought to a close the age of miracles, yet it hath not fallen unknown, unsung. Even some plants from the parent stock still survive. Pilgrims too, in many a band will yet gaze thoughtfully, and with some degree of veneration on the hallowed spot where grew and budded—according to monkish legends—as already described,—Joseph's saintly staff. This miraculous tree was the *Cratægus*, differing in no respect from the common hawthorn, except its sometimes blossoming in the winter; and even this budding in mid-winter is the characteristic of the species, as naturalists have abundantly proved. To a marvellous extent this sacred tree became an object of profitable merchandize. With ostensible veneration, Bristol merchants—more intent on their coffers than on the object of their traffic—sold to foreigners for immense sums, its leaves and its blossoms. Kings, nobles, devotees, of every kingdom and every class were intensely eager to obtain even a single leaf, as a divine antidote to ills, both mental and bodily. Even our own monarch James I., also Queen Anne, deigned to purchase for large sums, leaves and cuttings of this holy thorn! To the revenues of this Abbey it was a mine of gold.

"The walnut tree of Glaston Abbey was another of its marvels. This tree was regarded as a manifestation of divine favour upon vegetable productions. Legends declare that it ever put forth its leaves on St. Barnabas' day. Consequently this day of wonders became a day of festivity. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to behold this manifestation of divine interposition. Performing the enjoined duties of a religion that abounded with all that was gorgeous, enchanting, impressive, they returned to their homes to tell of all they had seen, and heard, and done;—

Digitized by Google

'The golden rood, the torch, the long procession,
The mass for parted souls, the song of even,
With pardon frank, for many a dark transgression,
And melodies that dropped like dew from Heaven!'

* * * * * *

"Omitting a galaxy of learned and worthy Abbots, Richard Whiting, the last, damands a brief, though mournful notice. He entered into office A. D. 1524, in eventful times. From abundant sources it is evident that he was a man of rare piety, of good scholarship, of commanding judgment. Combined with these excellent qualities, he was also so able a politician as to win the confidence and esteem of that great and remarkable man Thomas Cromwell. From the renowned Cardinal Wolsey he received the dignity of Abbot, as a reward for his many virtues and abilities. Even Henry the Eighth trusted him with an important embassy to Rome, when—as on other weighty occasions—he gave the greatest satisfaction to his royal employer. But how proverbially uncertain is human prosperity! How unhappy the mortal who lives only on the smile of princes! How false the light that flashes on glory's plume!

"It will render the fall of Glastonbury Abbey more striking, perhaps, if a rapid glance be taken of the honours and pomp that attend the Abbots in the height of its greatness. In an ecclesiastical form the Abbey was a princely court with vast income—not less than £200,000 annually, according to the present value of money—amply sufficient for all the purposes of charity, of hospitality, of grandeur. Not less than three hundred noble youths were here training up for the highest honours of church and state; while ofttimes five hundred guests were entertained with profuse liberality. In addition to his palatial residence at the Abbey, the Abbot possessed other beautiful rural retreats, so that the commissioners who stripped the monastery of its wealth, thus described to Henry the Eighth their splendour and numbers:—'The house (at Glaston-

Digitized by Google

bury) is great, goodly, and so princely that we have not seen the like, with four parks adjoining. The furthermost of them but four miles distant from the house, having a large weir (or lake) which is five miles compass, that being a mile and a half distant from the house, well replenished with great pike, bream, perch, and roach. Also four fair manor places belonging to the late Abbot, the furthermost, three miles distant, being goodly mansions, and also one in Dorsetshire, twenty miles distant from the monastery.' The people of the lands and villages for miles around Glastonbury were the Abbot's vassals and dependants, and never did the pilgrim or necessitous poor solicit aid in vain.

"Whenever the Abbot wished to go to one of these retreats, or even elsewhere, his retinue was of a royal character. One hundred attendants accompanied him,—a bannered host, with gorgeous habiliments and military weapons, and exalted crucifix preceding. As he advanced, the crowding peasantry paid their homage as to a monarch, imploring a benediction, and shouting their acclamations of good will. The same pomp accompanied him to the varied parliaments; and there he sat—long the first Abbot of the realm, mitred and crosiered, all dazzling with splendour and renown.

"Behold then this greatness! And now witness its wane!

'I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness;
And from that full meridian of my glory,
I haste now to my setting. I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more!'—*(Shakespeare.)*

"Henry the Eighth having cast off the Pope's authority—fearless as the strong-winged eagle—he soared to the supremacy of the church of this realm. Thwarted in his matrimonial intentions, he struck with resolute and unwavering firmness the shield of war. He went forth the invader of, well nigh, every religious establishment in the land. In this career of

Digitized by Google

spoliation the Abbot of Glastonbury withstood his royal antagonist even to the death. Neither terror, nor flattery, nor art could prevail upon him to give up his loved Abbey, which for centuries had been the treasure home of noblest charities and of hallowed piety. Fidelity to his trust girdled him like armour of gleaming steel. The oath of supremacy was offered him at Wells; but he disdained to surrender. Suffered to go at large, and suspecting no such catastrophe, he was rudely seized on his way to his monastery. A confessor was placed with him in his carriage, and he was commanded instantly to prepare for death. He earnestly supplicated 'a day or two's experience for further preparation,' to recommend himself to the prayers of his beloved brethren, and to bid them farewell. The marble heart of the commissioners rejected the prayers of the fallen one. He was forthwith ignominiously dragged upon a sledge to the summit of the Tor. There, with John Thorn, his treasurer, and Roger James, his under treasurer, he was cruelly and unmeritedly hanged, and then barbarously quartered, Nov. 14, 1539. The four quarters were sent to bleach in the winds of heaven, at Wells, Bath, Ilchester, and Bridgwater, whilst his head was placed over the Abbey gate at Glastonbury.

"After this dark deed of death, the work of spoliation and devastation forthwith commenced. 'This rich and goodly Abbey, surpassing in value and antiquity all the Abbeys in England — Westminster Abbey excepted — having been the burial place of several kings, and other illustrious persons, was by sacrilegious hands demolished,' and involved in one general ruin. Although under Queen Mary's reign an effort was again made to restore it to its former glory; and though encouraged by the celebrated Cardinal Pole, yet it failed; and from the overthrow of this and other religious brotherhoods, that stupendous fabric of English monachism, which for centuries had been alternately admired, feared, envied, or hated, sunk for ever into the dust.'

"As blow succeeds blow when the axe of the woodman lays

Digitized by Google

prostrate the oaken forest, even so followed deed after deed of alienation, of plunder, of destruction. The inmates of the Abbey were cruelly dispersed to feel the rough blasts of adversity and poverty; its immense revenues and possessions were scattered with lavish injustice; while the wreckless hand of violence, like ancient battering rams on granite walls, soon overthrew this goodly, time-honoured fabric. Afterwards, modern Vandals made, of its hurled-down ruins, its glorious sculptures, its fretted canopies, its wondrous arches,—stone quarries. Roads have even been repaired with portions of its hallowed material. Happily its relics have fallen for some years into the possession of nobler minds; the pilgrim wanderer can now, amidst its noble ruins, meditate on its past mutations, and learn impressive, instructive, and mournful lessons.

'All is silent now! Silent the bell,
That heard from yonder ivied turret high,
Warn'd the cowl'd brother from his midnight cell.
Silent the Vesper chant,—the Litany,
Responsive to the organ! Scattered lie
The wrecks of the proud pile, mid arches grey;
Whilst hollow winds through mantling ivy sigh;
And e'en the mouldring shrine is rent away,
Where, in his warrior weeds, the British Arthur lay!'"

(W. L. Bowles.)

Digitized by Google

FOURTH CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FOURTH CANTO.

CITY OF WELLS AND ITS CATHEDRAL—STATE OF THE ENGLISH PEASANTRY—CADBURY HEIGHT—ALFRED'S TOWER—RUINS OF NUNNEY CASTLE—EGGFORD, ELIZABETH ROWE—VALLIS VALE—REMAINS OF FARLEIGH CASTLE—CONFLUENCE OF THE FROME AND AVON—VALLEY OF THE AVON—VISION OF BATH, WHEN OCCUPIED BY THE ROMANS—SUNSET VIEW OF THE PRESENT CITY, ETC.

I.

THE mist yet hangs on Mindep's hoary head—
While o'er the moors the lark his matin sings;
Beneath those mountain-shadows, broadly spread,
The City of fair groves and gushing springs[1]—
O'er which old Time doth brood with folded wings
—Sits silent, while the loud world speedeth on;
To thee, the modern march of Science brings
No trophies of the triumphs she hath won;
Thou tell'st but of the past, of generations gone.

Digitized by Google

II.

And now the pilgrim on his staff doth lean,
And at short distance pause, to gaze around;—
When lo! dim, rising o'er the hazy scene,—
Like some huge exhalation from the ground—
St. Andrew's pile appears:—and now the sound
Of its deep bell doth speak the morning hour;
Throwing its voice, reverberating round,
From out the strong lungs of that lofty tower,
O'er village, wood, and dell, through hamlet, hall, and bower.

III.

Majestic, beautiful, in lonely state
That ancient structure doth before me stand;—
Who now its doubtful origin shall date? [hand—
Unknown the mind, and nameless he whose
In fair proportion, massive, light, or grand—
Heaven-taught, the varied whole in order drew;
Bade its proud towers arise, its roofs expand,
Until the mighty fabric gradual grew,
A thing, that none unmov'd in after time may view.

Digitized by Google

IV.

And here, methinks, it is most good to be,
Now melody doth breathe around, above,
From the deep centre of that sanctuary,— [grove,
While through those pillar'd aisles, like some tall
With undulating sound sweet voices move
In chaunt harmonious, psalmody divine;
And, lifting up the soul deprest, with love,
From earthly dross the soaring thoughts refine;
Till all, subdued, become meet offering at Thy shrine.

V.

I love the quiet of these fine old places,
Their courts and cloisters, groves and alleys green;
Where musing Memory walks, and silent traces
A thousand emblems, scattered o'er the scene,
That mark the flight of ages that have been:—
For I would hail whate'er the soul sublimes,
Or of its woe the wearied heart may wean;
A tree, a tower, or e'en those tuneful chimes,
That steal me from these selfish days, and iron times.

Digitized by Google

VI.

Farewell to thee, Weléa! now farewell—
Since last we parted—some few fleeting years—
Thy walls have echoed to the funeral knell
Of him* whose name the son of toil reveres;[3]
As foremost in the noble scheme that cheers,
And adds some comfort to his lowly lot:—
Long as an interest in the soil adheres
The peasant to his country and his cot,
Ne'er shall His memory be by him regarded not.

VII.

Hard is thy poor man's fate, Old England! now,
When stalwart arms employment seek in vain;—
He stalks the country o'er with gloomy brow,
As though he bore the branded mark of Cain:—
Look at yon splendid pile!† dost thou disdain
To be a prisoner 'neath its roof, for bread,
From thine own blood divided?—then the pain
And penalty shall rest upon thy head;
And thou may'st beg, starve, steal,—then hang till thou art dead.

* The late Dr. Law, Bishop of Bath and Wells.
† The Workhouse.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

Is such the boasted soil that gave thee birth,
Empress of nations, nursery of the brave;
The queen of ocean, envy of the earth,
Conq'ror alike, on land, or on the wave:—
Proud liberator of dark Afric's slave,
Yet making pining thousands of her own
Children, who go untimely to the grave; [groan
And thousands more, whose o'er-wrought spirits
Beneath their daily toil, unpitied and unknown?*

IX.

Time was, when o'er the surface of our land,
The labourer's voice was heard in frequent glee;
When the light heart gave vigour to the hand,
And all ranks moved in social harmony:—
When healthful sports, around its ancient tree,
Spread life and joyance o'er the village-green;—
Where now, the dance, the harmless revelry,
The mimic chase, the bat and ball, are seen?
Alas! among the things, the days that once have been.

* The above stanzas were written many years ago, when a large portion of our peasantry were destitute of work; and previous to the abolition of the corn laws.

Digitized by Google

X.

But, onward now—and I would fain forget
The wrongs of man to man. Yet, look around!
From this bold mount,* like unto Pisgah set,[3]
And view another Gilead in that ground;
With corn, fruit, herds, in blest abundance crown'd.
Strange state! which sometimes makes the blood rebel,
That wide-spread want, with plenty, should be found;
Yet *wherefore* thus?—I may not answer well;
But leave to wiser heads, or harder hearts to tell.

XI.

Mark yonder summit,† rising from afar—
Between the Ivel and the bordering Cale—
By the old Britons called the "Tower of War,"
When strong-holds ruled o'er every subject vale:
Thence waved their ancient banner to the gale,
That rallied them amid the doubtful fight:
Scene of the bardic song and martial tale,
When bold King Arthur, and each valiant Knight,
Besat the "Table Round," on Cadbury's fam'd height.[4]

* Dulcott Hill. † Cadbury Camp.

Digitized by Google

XII.

And there the legions of Imperial Rome
Raised their bright eagles in the noon-tide ray:—
Where are they now? *that* ruin is their tomb,
Making with baser dust one common clay:—
Long centuries have passed, as one short day,
Yet thou art still the same, majestic mound!
While in thine entrails empire's forms decay,
Freedom's elastic foot now treads thy ground;
And Nature, ever new, in beauty smiles around.

XIII.

From distant scenes then turning—on the height
Of Mindep's western slope, in musing mood,
We paus'd—as new uprising to our sight
The tower* that tells of Saxon triumph stood![5]—
Memorial of the wise, the great, and good,
The glorious Alfred! when, the foemen nigh,
He summoned, to the shades of broad Selwood,
His nobles, with their followers, to try
Once more, in freedom's cause, to conquer—or to die!

* Alfred's Tower, which stands on the boundary-line of Somerset and Wilts.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

Defer we now the story of that time—
A theme to chaunt upon some future day;
When, hope-inspired, we build the storied rhyme
Upon the soil of far-famed Athelney.
Hence other scenes invite our passing lay;
Scenes yet unknown to song, but ne'ertheless [way:
Throwing sweet charm around the wanderer's
War-stricken towers, splendour in ruin's dress,
With lingering decay, mid Nature's loveliness.

XV.

And yet, perchance, 'twere bootless thus to seek
Attentive audience from the busy crowd;[6]
Or hope by song, like bards of old, to break
The Idol-god,* to whom all hearts are bowed.
O blest were he who, with high thought endowed,
Could draw aside the votaries of gain,
And lead the worldly-minded and the proud
Nature's sweet teachings never to disdain,
Or deem the lessons taught by fall'n Ambition vain.

* Mammon.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

Descending from that height, we stood before
The ruined walls of Nunney's ancient towers ;[7]
Tradition tells not of its deeds of yore,
Nor History records its earlier hours :—
But when fell Discord roused those rival powers,
The people and the throne—then flew the brand
That fired its high-roof'd halls and blooming bowers,
With all that valour or that wealth had plann'd ;
Which spread a fearful light around the startled land !

XVII.

Thence, by the babbling of a streamlet led, [came
Through Whatley's silent Coombe—musing we
Before that humble home, where still the dead,
The pious Rowe, hath left her living name :[8]—
For charitable deeds do hallow fame—
While genius consecrates each favour'd spot,
Where love, or nature's charms, had nurs'd its flame ;
Twining fresh wreaths around the lowliest cot,
With memory of things that may not be forgot.

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

And here, where Vallis's romantic vale
Unfolds its beauties to the raptur'd view,
Oft would she stray, to bid fair morning hail,
Or watch the tints of eve, when every hue,
Like to the dying dolphin's, came and flew:—
While rock, and wooded bank, and flashing stream,
A bright creation, o'er her tablet grew;—
Or wooed the serious muse, till thought would teem,
And meditations high, inspire some holy theme.

XIX.

High, darkly frowning on a wood-crown'd steep,
That throws its shadow o'er the flowing Frome,
The towers of Farleigh stand.[9]—In silence deep,
Stern Ruin, musing ever on the doom
Of vanish'd greatness, sits amid their gloom
Relentless—Nature's fostering hand, the while,
Spreads her green mantle o'er their mouldering tomb;
Where, mid decay, beauty's wild roses smile,
And breathe a fragrance round the long-deserted pile.

Digitized by Google

XX.

Here, in these silent courts, where Time hath strown
The wreck of splendour with unsparing hand;
In meditative mood, I sit alone;—
And now before me move a gorgeous band
Of knights and ladies, magnates of the land,
While the high roofs with loving laughter ring;—
And mid the feast, where storied halls expand,
Soft, ever and anon, sweet voices sing,
And tuneful minstrels touch the harp's according string.

XXI.

Years pass—and now their place of death behold!
The last home of that gallant company;—
While round it hangs the harness of the bold,
Breast-plate, and helm, as if in mockery
Of things that have been, with the things that be
Glory how vain! of those who drew the sword
At Crecy, Poitiers, Azincour, we see
Their relics lie around—a name, a word,
Is all that marks the race of mighty Hungerford.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

O ever lovely, beautiful, and new,
Nature, alone immortal, breathes around!
And, with benignant hand, doth wildly strew
For me, her votary, the varied ground
With her sweet flowers—as lightly, to the sound
Of murmuring waters, down that vale I stray;
By wooded slope and verdant summit bound:
Till Freshford, on her steep, before me lay
All silent, in the shade of slow declining day.

XXIII.

Romantic spot! where rival valleys meet,
While Frome and Avon their glad waters wed;[10]
And onward slowly gliding, lave the feet
Of Hampton's rocky hill—whose towering head
Bends o'er the matchless vale beneath it spread
In softening light—where Nature's hand doth strew
Forms of deep beauty, till mine eye be fed
On scenes as fair as Claude or Poussin drew—
When Bath's proud City bursts once more upon my view!

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

'Twas evening now—and on that hill I stood,
Which looks o'er Avon's valley to the west;
Whence came the sun's effulgence, like a flood
Of glory—greeting every mountain's crest
With farewell glances, ere he sank to rest.
But wearied with the distance we had trod,
A heaviness upon mine eye-lids prest;
When, on the soft and thyme-besprinkled sod
Sinking, we felt the influence of the dreamy god.

XXV.

Methought it was the same sweet hour as then,
And similar the scene—while golden light [glen;
Spread o'er the beauteous vale, and stream, and
Save that each steep, now mansion-crown'd, and height,
With groves, or pendent woods, was richly dight:
While, by the green banks of Avona's stream,
Baths, temples, votive altars rose in sight
To Pallas, and to Dian—but supreme
On bright Apollo's brow smiled day's departing beam.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

From that brief dream awaking—on my gaze
The same fair scene, with features changed, appeared;
While high, majestic, looming through the haze,—
That with the night-breeze gradually cleared—
The Abbey's consecrated pile up-reared,
Where erst Minerva's fane had stood—and there,
For heathen hymns, Jehovah's praise is heard
From Christian voices pealing through the air;
While words of truth and love eternal life declare.

XXVII.

And on those steeps, erst shadowed o'er with wood,
Crescents and terraces in order rise;
And where the obelisk and statue stood, [skies:—
Now towers and spires, in beauty, pierce the
No longer 'neath the knife some victim lies,
Heaven's wrath to deprecate, or favour gain:—
Now more avails the One great sacrifice,
Than hecatombs of herds on altars slain—
Till death and hell subdued, all other hope were vain:

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO FOURTH CANTO.

PART I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 147.

The City of fair groves and gushing springs—

"The town of Wells, situated in the hundred of Wells-Forum, is said to have been at one time the first City in the county of Somerset. Even at this day, though far inferior to Bath in splendour of appearance and fashionable elegance, it has considerable claims to the attention of the topographer, and possesses many charms for the lover of social retirement. In this City, and its neighbourhood, the naturalist and antiquary will find numerous subjects of curiosity and interest. The uncommon structure of the Mendip hills, their mineral productions, and prodigious chasms, solicit the investigation of the former; while the latter is called to examine some of the finest remains of ancient ecclesiastical architecture, which in this country have escaped the desolation of the elements, or the ravages of war. The history of its religious institutions is, moreover, well worthy of regard, as affording three most memorable examples of the uncertainty of human grandeur and princely favour, in the lives of Giso, Godwin, and Wolsey. In the same records we trace many melancholy instances of the horrors of religious bigotry.

"Wells is very pleasantly situated under the Mendip hills,

Digitized by Google

which recede from it in the form of an amphitheatre, sheltering it to the north, while fertile and extensive meadows range themselves to the south. This City, though small, is populous, and generally well laid out. The streets are clean and commodious. The buildings for the most part neat, and not unfrequently elegant. Its noble Cathedral,* and St. Cuthbert's Church, with their rising towers, give it an air of dignity and grandeur, and deeply impress the religious visitant with feelings of piety and veneration.

"The name Wells is derived from a remarkable spring, called St. Andrew's Well, which rises near the episcopal palace. Hence issues a very copious stream, which, after encircling the palace, transmits itself through the south-west parts of the City. This well is supposed to possess medicinal, and even miraculous properties, being the favourite well of St. Andrew. This opinion it was which induced King Ina to fix upon this spot as a proper situation for erecting a collegiate church in honour to that saint."—*Nightingale's Top. and His. Des. of Som.*

The following remarks, we believe, are Southey's—

"If you ask a well-educated American, when he visits England, what objects in the mother country have impressed him most, he will answer, 'Its Cathedrals.' Place him in York Minster, or Westminster Abbey, and he no longer thinks of comparing England to America, the 'Religio Loci' makes itself felt, it awakens in him ancestral feeling of which he was before unconscious, and he then begins to understand that, in the thoughts and emotions which carry us back to past ages, and connect us with the generations which are gone, there is something more soothing, more salutary for the heart, and more elevating also, than in all the anticipations with which a young and emulous nation looks onward to the future. We have heard

* For a full account of this ancient pile, see a History and Description of the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew, in Wells, published by B. Backhouse, 1835.

Digitized by Google

more than one American say, that it is worth crossing the Atlantic to see some of our Cathedrals.

"The pride with which we now regard these stately monuments of antiquity is one proof of national improvement in feeling, as well as in taste and knowledge."

NOTE II. Page 150.

Thy walls have echoed to the funeral knell
Of him whose name the son of toil reveres;

We feel great pleasure in subjoining, by way of note, and in confirmation of our sentiments, the following extract, from a speech by the Rev. W. R. Newbolt, on the health of the Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese being drank at the Yeovil Agricultural Society, Dec. 6th, 1844.

"It was difficult, in times like these, for any individual of the clerical body to respond to the toast; but with respect to their reverend Diocesan, he might say that age and infirmities had told upon a naturally strong constitution, so that he was not now enabled to take an active part in the affairs of the diocese; still he lived, and lived in the hearts of his clergy, to whom he has proved as a father and a friend, for he had been always ready to come to their rescue, when any trouble or difficulty had arisen in a parish. (Hear, hear.) And they, as agriculturists, and members of a society which sought the good of the labourers, must feel the highest respect for the good Bishop, who, nearly twenty years ago, *was the first to introduce the allotment system into this County;* whereas, from what they read in the papers, some appeared to think it was a new feature in agricultural policy. Much has been said as to the condition of the labourers, and the causes which had brought about the

Digitized by Google

present state of things; but without entering upon the various opinions that prevailed, his belief was that they all lived too much in their own narrow sphere, and occupied themselves too much in their own particular affairs (hear)—there had not been that union of classes which ought to have existed in this great Christian country. (Cheers.) But there were those in this country, of high birth and station, who, acting upon Christian principles, were labouring to bring about a more cordial union of the different classes. A large meeting has lately been held in another part of the country, at which Lord John Manners, the Hon. Mr. Saville, and other talented and amiable men of distinction attended, and they had joined to a Labourers' Friend Society, the desirable plan of promoting the healthful and exhilarating recreations of the people. (Hear, hear.) They had countenanced—he was not ashamed to notice it—the manly and noble game of Cricket, by joining in it with the labourers. (Hear.) He thought it desirable, when the labour of the day was over, for the clergyman, the peer, and the peasant, to join together, on some occasions, in harmless amusement; he had always encouraged the game of Cricket in every parish in which he had resided. (Hear.) He was not singular in his notions now, for the learned judges of the land did not think it beneath their dignity to recommend these games, as a rational means of promoting union and good feeling between the different classes. This might be considered a *young* England notion by some (a laugh); he did not care what it was called, for he knew it was a good old English practice. (Cheers.) * * * There was a large and influential body growing in this country, and daily increasing, who cared not for the great rival political parties in the state, and who were resolved to act independent of them, upon wise, just, and Christian principles, in their endeavours to break down the barrier of exclusiveness, which had long injured, if not disgraced, this nation; their object being not only to add to the comforts of the labouring class, and to raise their condition morally, but to encourage their harmless amusements.

Digitized by Google

In carrying out these plans of amelioration, however, care must be taken that the most important question be not overlooked, that of providing employment and fair wages for the labourers. (Cheers.) * * * He thought if each union had a certain portion of arable land attached to it, and employed the surplus able-bodied hands in spade husbandry, it would be of great benefit. To see the poor labourer, who was able and willing to work, wanting employment, and while he was surrounded by luxury of every kind, and plenty, on applying for labour, sent away with an order for the workhouse, was most deplorable. For the labourer to see those he loved—and the poor man was not a brute without natural feeling or affection—wanting bread, and looking up to him, whilst he had no resource but to be separated from them, and to submit to what was provided by a cruel law, administered by men, however humane as individuals, who too often forgot what was due to honest and helpless poverty, was heart-rending. He spoke from experience, being a poor-law guardian himself, and knowing how, being mixed up with the constant administration of the system, it tended to chill the best feelings of the heart. He had no hesitation in saying, thus openly, that the workhouse-test, applied indiscriminately to the deserving and undeserving, the industrious and idle, the sober and profligate, was a crying injustice and a disgrace to this Christian country."

NOTE III. Page 152.

Yet, look around!
From this bold mount, like unto Pisgah set,

On leaving Wells, at about a mile and a half distant, we ascended Dulcot hill, a bold and precipitous height, which

Digitized by Google

commands rich and extended views over the surrounding vales. Descending from thence to the beautiful little valley of Dinder, through which flows a rapid and clear stream, called Croscombe-water, we arrive at the latter village, situate in a narrow and romantic glen, with a picturesque church and spire, and which is rendered not less interesting by having the names of Warner and East among its incumbents.

The view from the summit of the hill above Croscombe, on the road from Shepton Mallet, looking towards Wells, is extremely fine. Gilpin, in his Observations on the Western Parts of England, thus notices it:—"Our approach to Wells, from the *natural* and *incidental* beauties of the scene, was uncommonly picturesque. It was a hazy evening; and the sun, declining low, was hid behind a deep purple cloud, which covered half the hemisphere, but did not reach the western horizon. Its lower skirts were gilt with dazzling splendour, which spread downwards, not in diverging rays, but in one uniform ruddy glow; and uniting at the bottom with the mistiness of the air, formed a rich, yet modest tint, with which Dulcott hill, projecting boldly on the left, the towers of Wells beyond it, and all the objects of the distance, were tinged; while the foreground, seen against so bright a piece of scenery was overspread with the darkest shades of evening. The whole together invited the pencil, without soliciting the imagination. But it was a transitory scene. As we stood gazing at it, the sun sunk below the cloud, and being stripped of all its splendour by the haziness of the atmosphere, fell, like a ball of fire, into the horizon; and the whole radiant vision faded away."

Digitized by Google

NOTE IV. PAGE 152.

Scene of the bardic song and martial tale,
When bold King Arthur, and each valiant Knight,
Beset the "Table Round," on Cadbury's fam'd height.

Cadbury Castle—as most of the ancient strongholds, or fortified encampments, are commonly called, stands near the great public road, about midway between Ilchester and Wincanton. We give the following description of it from Collinson's History of Somerset.

"That this tract has been the scene of military action in ancient times, is sufficiently evident from its very name, which signifies the *Tower of War*, were there no remains of martial antiquity extant to evince it. But here, on the eastern side of the parochial church, at the northern extremity of a ridge of high hills, stands one of the noblest fortifications in this or perhaps any other County, called by old topographers *Camalet;* but by the natives *Cadbury Castle.* Its form is neither entirely circular nor square, but somewhat between both, conforming to the shape of the hill. Part of it seems to be hewn out of the solid rock, and is defended by four ditches, and within is a still higher entrenchment of a circular form, which was the citadel or *Prætorium*, but vulgarly called King Arthur's palace. The rampart is composed of stones, now overspread with earth, and has only one entrance from the east, which is guarded by six or seven ditches. The area contains upwards of thirty acres. Within it, and in the ditches, have been found, at different periods, many noble relics of the Roman empire; such as pavements, hypocausts, pateras,urns, fibulæ, and immense quantities of coins, chiefly of Antoninus and Faustina. There have also been discovered in its topmost area, remnants of arches, doorjambs, bolts, hand-grindstones, and great quantities of round

Digitized by Google

pebble-stones, quite different from any in this County, and supposed to have been brought hither from the sea for the purpose of slinging, or shooting from the bow. Leland tells us that a silver horse-shoe was found here within the memory of people living in his time; and Selden, in his notes on Drayton's Polyolbion, says that it was full of ruins and old buildings.

"Writers have been much divided as to the name of this fortification, and the time of its erection. The boldest assertion reaches to the days of King Arthur; and the annotator of one historian, NENNIUS, places the eleventh battle of that King against the Saxons in this spot. *Undecimum fuit bellum in monte qui dicitur* Aqued-Cath-Regenion, *quem nos* Cath-bregion *appellamus.* Caer Celemon is likewise mentioned among the British Cities of the same author. Drayton, speaking of the river Ivel, calls it

'The nearest neighbouring flood to Arthur's ancient seat,
Which made the Britaines name through all the world so great.
Like Camelot what place was ever yet renown'd?
Where, as at Carlion, oft he kept the *table-round,*
Most famous for the sports at Pentecost so long, [sprong.'*
From whence all Knightly deeds, and brave atchievements

"The name of this mountain truly, as it is called by Leland, Camden, Stukely, and others, CAMALET, savours something of one of the British names assigned to it, viz. *Caer-Celemon,* or *Caer-Calemion;* but the other, *Cath,* or *Caer-Bregion,* certainly comes nearer its present appellation, *Cadbury-Castle,* which is commonly used by all the inhabitants of the vicinity, who know

* There are many places here and in the neighbourhood called by the name of King Arthur; as the Camp itself is denominated Arthur's Palace; Arthur's Round Table here mentioned; Arthur's Kitchen; Arthur's Well, &c., and Stukely tells us of a road across the fields under the Castle, bearing very rank corn, called King Arthur's Hunting Causeway.

Digitized by Google

indeed no other. However, whether this were a work of the Britons or of the Romans, no doubt can possibly be maintained of its having been occupied by the latter people for a considerable space of time; as they erected here not only fabricks of temporary utility, but of great labour, and even magnificence. But what the Roman name hereof was, we must still be ignorant of. Stukely judges it was the *Coloneas* of Ravennas, which others have put in another part of the island, and we know of no station nearer Cadbury than *Ischalis*, our present Ivelchester."

NOTE V. Page 153.

—as now uprising to our sight
The tower that tells of Saxon triumph stood!—

Alfred's Tower—erected on Pen-Selwood, or the brow of a hill which overlooked the ancient and extensive Forest of Selwood. It is of triangular form, and hollow, with a stair-turret, from whence is a most splendid view over a large portion of Somerset. Above the entrance is a figure of King Alfred, with the following description:—

"Alfred the Great
On this summit erected his Standard
Against Danish Invaders.
He instituted Juries,
Established a Militia,
Created and exerted a Naval Force.
A Philosopher and a Christian,
The father of his People,
The Founder of the English Monarchy
And of Liberty."

Digitized by Google

As there is no record of any battle of importance having been fought on this spot, the memorial must refer to the great gathering of Alfred, his nobles and followers, in Selwood forest, preparatory to his final and decisive victory over the Danes at Edington, in Wiltshire, Selwood being also in a direct line from Athelney, Alfred's retreat, to the place of battle, of which we shall treat in a future portion of the poem.

NOTE VI. Page 154.

And yet, perchance, 'twere bootless thus to seek
Attentive audience from the busy crowd;

Comparing the spirit and tendency of modern with that of ancient times—a writer of the present day observes—"Could we but elevate our iron rule by imbuing it with the spiritual longings of antiquity, what nation, present or past, should overtop the greatness which it would be ours to attain? Glory to the man, who, impelled by genius, and commissioned from heaven, arrests the busy and earth-stooping multitude with strains of melody that call them for a time from labour, and remind them of their ultimate and noble destination! Glory to the great masters of verse of every age who have prevailed upon their brethren to contemplate Nature as she is, but as they alone could point her out, and allured them for a season, from the confusion of this world, to behold the excellence that is vouchsafed them from a better! Scorn not the poet! The greatest triumphs of science would be dearly purchased at the sacrifice of poesy. The wealthiest nation would be beggared with the loss of her minstrelsy, and with the soul of harmony extinct."

Digitized by Google

NOTE VII. PAGE 155.

Descending from that height, we stood before
The ruined walls of Nunney's ancient towers;

"On the north side of the village of Nunney, three miles from Frome, stands the Castle, which, though not large, is a fine vestige of antiquity.

"This edifice was raised by Sir John Delamere, lord of this place, about the end of the thirteenth century. Its form is a double square, with a round tower at each corner. On these towers are turrets rising fifteen feet above them, and mostly covered with ivy, as also are the upper parts of some of the towers, on the tops of which are several ash trees, and other shrubs, some of them rising above the broken tops of the turrets, exhibiting a fine picturesque scene of desolated grandeur.

"An elliptical moat, twenty feet wide and ten deep, surrounded the whole building, but is now almost filled up with weeds and rubbish. It communicates with the river, and formerly had an embattled wall round it twelve feet high.

"In the civil wars this Castle was garrisoned for the King, and had in it a large magazine; but was taken Sept. 8th, 1645, by the Parliament army, together with all its stores, and burnt, to prevent its future service to the King. The effects of the siege are still visible in the shattered walls.

"The ancient name of this parish is *Nuni*, there having been in Saxon times, according to tradition, a nunnery on the little stream here, as appears from the charter of King Edred, brother of King Edmund, made to the Abbey of Glastonbury, wherein he grants to the monks of that house part of, viz. two hides in this vill. At the Conquest it either lost its former name, or was very much corrupted by the transcribers of the Norman Survey, in which nothing like the original name occurs, save *Noiun*, described as the property of William de Mohun."

Collinson.

Digitized by Google

On leaving the quiet village of Nunney, we followed the course of a rivulet through a narrow and wooded valley, called Whatley Combe, on the southern bank of which, in a very delightful situation, were discovered, some few years since, the remains of a Roman villa, consisting of tesselated pavements, baths, &c. The former have been enclosed for protection, by the proprietor of the land, and may be at any time seen by application to the tenant on the estate.

NOTE VIII. Page 155.

Before that humble home, where still the dead,
The pious Rowe, hath left her living name :—

This retired abode—the retreat of the pious and ingenious Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe—is situated at Eggford, near Frome. It stands alone, by the way-side, on the road from that town to Mells, at the entrance of Vallis Vale; and is an object of curiosity to many, and of veneration to the few who are capable of appreciating one who has given an interest to its walls, by their association with her worth and talents.

This accomplished woman could have been no ordinary person, who excited the admiration of Prior; and a portion of whose writings was published after her decease, by the learned Dr. Watts.

Vallis Vale, or Vallis Bottom as it is sometimes called, is formed at the junction of two small streams; one flowing through a deep, winding, and woody glen from Mells, and the other, through a more open and cheerful combe, from Nunney. The scenery at the meeting of these waters is very bold, picturesque, and beautiful, and is much visited by tourists; while it forms a favourite resort for summer parties from the surrounding

Digitized by Google

neighbourhood. These scenes afford some good studies for the pencil, and we understand the late Mr. Benjamin Barker, the landscape painter of Bath—and brother to the more celebrated artist of that name—drew many of his subjects at this source. There is an ancient mansion, now converted to a farm-house, still standing on a high bank,* overlooking the bottom, formerly the residence of the Leversedge family.

NOTE IX. Page 156.

High, darkly frowning on a wood-crown'd steep,
That throws its shadow o'er the flowing Frome,
The towers of Farleigh stand.

"This ancient village of Farley-Montfort, or Farley-Hungerford, is situated at the eastern extremity of the County, six miles south-east from Bath. It had its name from the *fairness* of its *leys* or meadows; the country being luxuriantly champaign, and watered by the river Frome, which, winding its way over a rocky channel, thickly overhung with willows, towards the Avon, at Freshford, divides this County from that of Wilts.

"The Manor and Castle of Farley (after having belonged from an early period to the ancient families of De Montford and Hungerford) were sold in the year 1686, to the family of Bayntun, and afterwards came to that of Houlton, in which (with some little intermediate deviation to the family of Frampton, of Moreton, in Dorsetshire) they have ever since continued.

"The ruins of the Castle stand on the northern acclivity of a

* From whence its name Vallis appears to be derived. It is called in an old record, Falois, Faleis, Valeis, and La Valeis; all corruptions of the word La Valaize, signifying in old French, a bank, or sloping hill.

Digitized by Google

rocky hill, embowered with oaks, walnut trees, and poplars, and present a melancholy picture of fallen greatness. It consisted of two courts or wards lying north and south; the court northward was one hundred and eighty feet in length, from east to west, and one hundred and forty-four feet in breadth, from north to south; and was flanked by four round towers, sixty feet in height. Each of these towers, the walls of which are five feet thick, were originally divided into three stories, the apartments lit by narrow windows and embrasures. The walls of the south-east and south-west towers are still remaining tolerably entire (except the stair-cases), and beautifully veiled with ivy. More than half also of the north-east tower is still standing; the southern wall being fallen down, the windows and old chimney-pieces, interwoven with ivy and wild roses, appear to view. The north-west tower is quite down, as are also almost all the intermediate walls and buildings, except a small portion of the parapet northward, which overlooks a deep dell shaded with the thickest wood. In this court stood the great hall, and the state apartments, which (if tradition speaks the truth) were not to be equalled in grandeur by any structure in this part of England, being decorated with rich tapestry, exquisite sculpture, and beautiful paintings. The hall was a very large and long apartment, hung round with armour worn by its martial possessors, and spoils brought from Cressy, Poictiers, Agincourt, and Calais. But of these buildings, which towards the close of the last century* were nearly entire, the smallest remnant now is not left standing; the whole area of the court being rudely strewed with their ruins, which lie in heaps, covered with weeds and luxuriant herbage. A large gateway led from this to the southern court, in which were the offices, stables, storehouses, and guard-rooms; the principal entrance was on the east side, through an embattled gate-house, the shell of which is standing. Before it there was formerly a

* This was published in 1791.

Digitized by Google

drawbridge over a deep moat, which surrounded the whole Castle; the holes through which the pullies of the bridge passed are still visible in the gateway wall; and over the arch are the arms and crest of the Hungerfords richly sculptured in the stone. On the eastern side of this court stands the chapel, to which there is a descent of several steps. This building has of late years been repaired, and is now in tolerable condition: it consists of a nave and chantry chapel on the north side, the former fifty-six feet in length, and nineteen and a half in breadth; the latter twenty feet in length, and fourteen in breadth. The altar slab is of rich granite: against the south wall stands the old pulpit, and underneath it are several pieces of armour, such as a head-piece, breast-plate, with a saddle, brought hither in an old chest from the Castle hall, about the time of its demolition."*—*Collinson.*

The following account of Farleigh Castle,† taken from an old survey, will prove interesting, as throwing a light on its *ancient* state:

"The sayde Castell, standeth in a Parke, lenyng unto a hill syde, portly, and very strongly buylded, having inward and outward wards, and in the inward wards many fayre chambers, a fayre large hall, on the hedde of which hall, iij or iiij goodly greate chambers, with fayre and strong rofs, and dyv's other fayre lodgings, with all man' housses of office.

"The Parke, wherein the said Castell standeth ys ij miles and iij q'rtes in circuite, a verye fayre and p'kely grounde, beying envyroned rownde aboute with hygh hylls, and in the myddes a broke, and depe ronnying streme, ronnyng throw it, and hard by the Castell wall very well set with grete okes, and other woodde, whyche is valued to be worthe cccc'li, and is replenyshed with xxvj dere of auntlet, and xliiij of rascall, and

* There are some monuments to Sir Thomas, Sir Walter, and Sir Edward Hungerford, worthy the notice of the antiquary.

† First purchased by Sir Thomas de Hungerford, who died in the year 1398.

Digitized by Google

the King's highness dothe gyve by reason of the sayde Castell iij advawsons and ij chauntryes, which ij chauntryes doe stand w'tin the walls of the Castell, and the sayde Castell ys worthe in rentes, fermes, and casualties * * *"

"Though the remains of this once celebrated Castle and Mansion, &c., are very trifling; yet from the singularity of the sepulchral vault, they merit the attention of every lover of antiquity. The lands are situated partly in Wilts and partly in Somerset, and lie between the town of Frome and city of Bath; and a Roman villa (lately discovered within the former demesnes) is now under investigation.

"Having traced," continues Sir Richard Hoare, from whose small work, "Hungerfordiana," these extracts are taken, "the marriages and means by which they (the Hungerford family) *obtained* such extensive possession, it becomes me to state by what unlucky means they were finally deprived of them.

"Sir Edward Hungerford, who died in 1711, and who, by his excessive extravagance,* squandered a princely fortune, and thereby acquired the title of "*Spendthrift*," is said to have been one of the Poor Knights of Windsor, but upon enquiry, I cannot find that his name was inrolled among them. Certain, however, it is, that by the aforesaid personage, the remaining part of the once extensive property of the Hungerfords, was dismembered and disposed of.

"To him is attributed the demolition of the family house in London, on the site of which now stands *Hungerford Market;* and where his bust still exists under a niche in the wall, with the following inscription:

"'Forum, utilitate publicæ perquam necessarium Regis Caroli, 2^di^ innuente majestate, propriis sumptibus erexit, perfecitque D. Edoardus Hungerford, Anno MDCLXXXII.'

"Thus terminated the glory and good fortune of the Hunger-

* "He is said to have carried it so far as to have given 500 guineas for a wig, to figure at some court ball."

Digitized by Google

ford family, which had been ushered into our County with such unprecedented success. Even the name is become extinct in England, though I have reason to think it survives in Ireland. The late Mrs. Crewe was the last female descendant, and the last male (now living, 1823) is a Mr. Luttrell, descended from Ann, daughter of Sir George Hungerford, and Frances, daughter of Lord Seymour, of Trowbridge, who espoused Edward Luttrell, of Dunster, Esq.

'Sic Transit Gloria.'

"A portrait of Sir Walter Hungerford, of Farley, in the possession of Richard Pollen, Esq. represents the said personage, armed cap-a-pie, on horseback, accompanied by various animals around him, the meaning of which is explained by the following inscription written on the painting:

"'Sir Walter Hungerforde, Knight, had, in Quene Elizabeth's time, the seconde of her raine, for fouer yere together, a baye horse, a blacke greyhounde, a leveratt,—his offer was for fouer yerae together, to all Eynglande, not above his betters, he that shoulde showe the best horse for a man of armes—a greyhounde for a hare—a haucke for the ryver—to wine iii hundred poundes, that was a hundred the poundes a pese.—Also, he had a gerfalcon for the herne, in her majesty's time, wiche he kept xviii yere, and offered the lyke to flye for a hundred pounde, and were refused for all.

"Beneath another portrait of the same personage are the following lines. He is styled *Amicis amicissimus*, and these lines are added,

'Vive tibi, teque habita, nec grandia tentes,
Effugit immodicas parvula puppis aquas.'"

Hungerfordiana.

Mem.—A Lord Hungerford is mentioned—with Earl Talbot, Lord Searles, and other valiant officers—among those who were

Digitized by Google

taken prisoners at the fatal battle of Pataye, gained by the French, under the celebrated Joan D'Arc, in 1429.

NOTE X. Page 158.

Romantic spot! where rival valleys meet,
While Frome and Avon their glad waters wed;

The picturesque village of Freshford, four miles from Bath, just noticed, stands on a steep declivity towards the east, and commands some very bold and striking scenery. Situated nearly opposite the confluence of the Frome and Avon, which forms a centre whence three valleys diverge, it constitutes a spot of great interest and beauty. Following the course of the Avon, which has just left the county of Wilts for that of Somerset, we pass by a viaduct over a small stream, which flows down a valley by the village of Combe Hay, which reminded us of Carrington, the poet of *Dartmoor*, whose ashes there repose.

Digitized by Google

SOMERSET.

FIRST CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FIRST CANTO.

CREWKERNE — CHURCHYARD — GRAMMAR SCHOOL, WITH YOUTHFUL REMINISCENCES—HAMDEN HILL—RIVER IVEL, ILCHESTER, FRIAR BACON—RIVER PARRET, REMAINS OF MUCHELNEY ABBEY—BURTON PYNSENT, CHATHAM—SEDGMOOR—DUKE OF MONMOUTH'S ENTRY INTO TAUNTON—ADVANCE TO BRIDGWATER—BATTLE BETWEEN THE REBELS AND THE ROYAL FORCES—DEFEAT AND FLIGHT OF MONMOUTH.

I.

The rooks are cawing o'er the old elm-trees,
As they were wont, in days long, long ago;
While whisperings now, as then, steal on the breeze,
That waves their ancient branches to and fro:
But some have suffered in the grasp of slow
Consuming time—while others, tempest-riven,
Stand, like brave men, above the storms of woe;
To whom firm faith and fortitude are given,
Though earthward borne, to fix their stedfast gaze on heaven!

Digitized by Google

II.

And there are youthful forms, but not the same,
And youthful voices, mingling in their glee;
I recognise them not—nor voice, nor name—
As forth from studious hours they issue free,
With the glad shout of wild hilarity.
Yet where are they, I cry—ah, where are they—
Mine earliest friends, my boyhood's company?
A merry band—as joyous and as gay—
But echo only answers "where, ah, where are they?"

III.

O'er the wide world dispers'd, oh, never more,
Commingling thus, to meet on earth again;
The steps of some have sought each distant shore
In eager chase of glory or of gain;
And some have join'd religion's graver train.
Alas! how few can memory recall
Of those familiar forms, now sought in vain;
For one or two, haply a tear may fall,
Oblivion o'er the rest spreads out her gloomy pall.

Digitized by Google

IV.

But thou, proud pile,* art yet the same—buttress
And arch, with battlement and tower, betray
No trace that leads to dark forgetfulness,
Amid the crumbling ruins of decay:—
Thou lookest still as in mine earlier day,
Though change hath been around—but now fare-well!
Yet longer, musing here, I may not stay;—
Far hence have we to pace ere vesper-bell,
And still of many a scene and ancient time to tell.

V.

O'er Parret's infant stream—upon the brow
Of Hamden's lofty hill,† at length, we stood;—
O what a glorious prospect open'd now,
Of cultur'd fields, rich meads, and waving wood;—
And, far beyond, the gleam of Severn's flood:—
While, form'd to kindle up the patriot-flame,
Yon distant column tells of gallant Hood![1]
In death by victory crown'd—renownéd name,
Upon the roll of those who grace their Country's fame!

* The Church and Tower. † An ancient Roman Station.

Digitized by Google

VI.

Here, like an eagle from his eyry, gazed
The Roman victor o'er that ample ground;
Whence oft, when danger press'd, the beacon blazed,
And spread th' alarm from camp to camp around:
And here, at eve, the trumpet's brazen sound
Startled the traveller on his lonely way;
As up that steep the tramping cohort wound,
Returning from the forage or the fray—
'Twas thus in ages past—how peaceful 'tis to-day!

VII.

And there, mid fertile plains, Ischalis* rose, [brave,
By the same conquering hands[2]—who, sternly
The sceptre held alike o'er friends and foes;
Yet, mid their power, arts, arms, and science
Then, soft-reflected over Ivel's wave, [gave:—
Her lofty ramparts and her towers were seen,
Where now his flowing waters only lave
Deserted walls, with broken banks between;—
While Silence lonely sits, where empire's steps have been!

* Ilchester.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

Yet more distinguish'd thou, that on thy soil
First saw the light, that child of future fame,
The rare Franciscan,*—who, by learned toil
And lofty genius, gained an evil name;
At once his Country's glory and her shame!
Benighted days! when his illumin'd page,
In Envy's eyes, dark Magic's art became;
While Science wept o'er her imprison'd sage,
And left to later times, the wonder of his age!

IX.

From Hamden's height descending—by the side
Of Parret's devious stream anon we stray;
Whose gentle waters through rich meadows glide,
Until, with Ivel's mingling on their way,
They flow around the moors of Muchelney:
Where still the musing wanderer may see
That ruin'd Abbey, famous in its day,[3]
Which, for deep crime, if pardon there might be,
In penitence was rais'd to God and piety.

* Roger Bacon.

Digitized by Google

X.

A thousand years, save one brief century,
Have pass'd since then—yet still the gentle air
Plays round that ancient pile as wooingly,
As though the storms of time had ne'er been there:
While loving Nature shows her tenderest care
Towards all aged things—throwing her green
Dark-ivied mantle o'er the lone and bare,
And gives such beauty to each fading scene,
As makes us scarce regret the splendour that hath been.

XI.

The sun had passed its zenith, when we came,
Through elm-embower'd fields to that proud height,*
For ever link'd with Chatham's glorious name;
Where oft his noble spirit would delight,
Whene'er, contending for his Country's right,
From listening senates he awhile could flee;
Exchanging place and power, for the sweet sight
Of flocks and herds, and children sporting free,
With rural peace, pure love, and home society.

* Burton Pynsent.

Digitized by Google

XII.

Here, raised to friendship, still unscath'd doth stand,
With emblematic flame aspired to heaven,
That noble monument, upon the land,
By private wealth to public virtue given:—
Though o'er its head the threatening storm hath [driven,
And Avarice would barter it at will;
Long may it be by lightning's shaft unriven,
And patriot conservers guard it still;
Memorial of the Men who dwelt on Pynsent's hill!

XIII.

From that bold steep, far rising in the west,
The Towers of Taunton dimly meet the sight;
Through whose broad vale, with fruitful bounty blest,
The gentle Tone glides murmuring with delight:
—While underneath the slope of Polden's height,
Far spreading to the south, lies Sedgmoor's field;
Recalling to the mind that fatal fight,
Where Valour's sons, misled, were forced to yield;
When Victory stained her crest, and Mercy dropped her shield!

Digitized by Google

XIV.

Fair Town !* of old for love of freedom fam'd,
When civil strife, blood-stain'd, bestrode the land
—By famine, fire, and slaughter still untamed—
Foremost among the brave, thy patriot band
Stood like some bold rock on a stormy strand:
For midst them moved a master-spirit—He
Whose flag, in after days, the breezes fanned,
For England's glory, over every sea;
Until the world outrang with Blake and Victory ![5]

XV.

And now once more, at Freedom's call, they rise,
For pure religion over Popish zeal;—
Hark! joyous shouts ascending rend the skies,
And the loud bells ring out a merry peal;[6]
For Monmouth comes! his cause the Nation's weal,
While thousands welcome him with wild delight;
Few to the Royal standard there are leal;
Enthusiastic joy is at its height,
While crowds exultant rush to view that gallant sight!

* Taunton.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

The sunny streets are garlanded with flowers,
While from each window scarfs and kerchiefs
Gay streamers flaunt above the lofty towers, [wave;
And green leaves deck the round hats of the brave:
While young and blooming maids, and matrons grave,
With broidered banner meet th' approaching train;
And giving to their Chief the colours, crave,
With earnest trust, they ne'er might wear a stain,
But still in Freedom's front renown and honour gain!

XVII.

And one, who led that fair procession, bears
The sacred "Book," and gives it to his hand;
"I come," he said, and reverently swears—
"These pure truths to defend,—and o'er the land,
Bid Conscience freely, like the air, expand!"
The silent streets with acclamations ring,
While round their idol crowds uncover'd stand;
Heart-stirring hymns a thousand voices sing,
And cry "Long life to Monmouth!" "Monmouth for our king!"

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

Next morn, with sound of shrilly trumpets rose,
And thousand hearts, with hope and joy elate,—
Unconscious of the cloud of coming woes, [fate,—
The showers of blood that stained the book of
Proclaim'd him King of England's mighty State!
Then Pleasure's cup o'erflowed, as though delight
Round hospitable boards could ne'er abate;
While dance and song prevail'd; till calmly bright,
The sun blushed o'er the scenes which marked that festive night.

XIX.

A few brief hours, and ancient Brugia* saw,
With gladden'd shouts, advance rebellion's train;[7]
While hundreds joined, despite avenging law,
Their onward march Bristowa's walls to gain—
But fate averts, and all attempts were vain—
From Scotia's hills Argyle's repulse he hears;
His own bold stroke unequal to sustain,
Duke Monmouth, overcome by doubts and fears,
Sees but defeat and death amidst his Country's tears.

* Bridgwater.

Digitized by Google

XX.

Ten days had passed, and Parret now beheld
That rebel host returning o'er his tide ;[9]
Harass'd and baffled, but with hearts unquell'd,
Its Chief resolved *there* battle to abide,
And victory or defeat his cause decide :—
Nor long he waited,—tidings swiftly came,—
Diffused, like wild fire, o'er the country wide,—
'Earl Feversham, expectant of his game,
On Sedgmoor was encamped'—that fatal field of fame !

XXI.

From yon high tower,* that holds the plain around
Beneath its gaze—did Monmouth now survey,
Flanked by deep fosse, the well selected ground,
Whereon the white tents of his foemen lay :—
The morn had past, upon a July day,
When secret orders to prepare for fight
Were given—and freely did his men obey ;
With aspirations that the coming night
May bring a morn of joy—and God defend the right !

* Bridgwater Church-tower.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

It was the Sabbath—and the rebels lay
Meanwhile encamp'd upon the Castle-field;[9]
Where, spurred and booted, men stood up to pray,
That He, the Lord of hosts, would be their shield;
And others preach'd what prophets had reveal'd:
While novices in arms were at their drill,
The pike to handle, or the scythe to wield;
And some were thinking of their homes, until
Evening's grey veil had fall'n—and all around was still.

XXIII.

But as the night advanced, quick stir arose
Among the thousands congregated there;[10]
As from the ground, refreshed by brief repose,
Fast to their ranks the rous'd-up host repair;—
While not a drum is heard, nor trumpet's blare,
But tramp of horse and heavy-treading feet;
All but their Chieftain seem bold heart to bear;
While, as they pass, old friends and lovers greet—
Though 'tis the last time now, that many there would meet!

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

And onward silently that force proceeds
Upon its midnight march—the air is still,
While sleeping flowers, spread o'er the summer meads,
Their fragrant sighs in dewy drops distill:—
Bright shines the moon wide over plain and hill,
And boreal lights are playing in the sky;—
Too holy seems the time for man to kill
His brother man—but now the hour is nigh, [lie!
When hundreds of that host in death's cold arms will

XXV.

And now the moor is gained—the royal camp
Lies unsuspecting there in still repose;— [damp
When, hark!—a random shot—and through the
Marsh-brooding mist, report and flash disclose,—
Like spectres rising round,—their rebel foes!
Then, sudden, rolls the loud awakening drum;
From tent to tent the hurrying tumult grows—
Some form, in haste, the serried line—while some
Startle the silent night, with cries, 'they come,' 'they come!'

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

It boots not here to sing the battle's strife,
To tell of doughty deeds, or talk of glory;
The western men were prodigal of life,
And the sun rose upon a field all gory:—
There spreads the moor, a sad *memento mori*
Of blasted hopes and sacrifices vain;
But they are told in England's living story,—
While patriot-pilgrims long shall seek that plain,
And ponder o'er the spot, where lie the gallant slain.

XXVII.

For soon flush'd Victory appear'd in sight,
And took her stand upon the tyrant's side;
While pale Defeat led on the rebels' flight,
And Monmouth from the field was seen to ride:[11]
On Polden's height he turn'd—and there descried
The last brave efforts of his faithful few; [died—
With whom, in honour's bed, he should have
But on and on he spurr'd, and never drew
His bridle-rein to breathe, 'till far from foemen's view.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

The morning dawn'd—and Brugia saw again—
How chang'd the scene from that of yesternight!
Those zealous thousands hurrying from the plain,[13]
And blood-stain'd streets, with garlands still bedight,
O'er-spread with men, sore mangled in the fight:—
All sought for safety, which but few could find,
So fierce the vengeance of the victor's might—
While fearful shouts came flying on the wind,
With wild dismay in front—horror and death behind.

XXIX.

And, with the morrow, on the highway stood
Long lines of jibbets, whence the victims hung;
And soon the dust was curdled with their blood;
While some, in creaking chains, long festering swung,
Until the air was tainted—hamlets rung
With the wild cries of wrong—while curses low
Were mutter'd forth from every mother's tongue;
And sanguine streams of life ne'er ceas'd to flow,
'Till the wide country round was steep'd in speechless woe.

Digitized by Google

XXX.

And thou* too sawest, by the quiet Tone,—
Unlike those days beheld three moons before,
When Monmouth's daring cause seem'd all but won,
And thy glad sons the face of joyance wore—
Streets strew'd with limbs, and gutters choked with gore:—
Hell doth not hold throughout its realms a pair
Of demons half so dark as those† who bore
Dominion o'er that scene[13]—the prince of Air
Alone might match the deeds then perpetrated there.

XXXI.

And noble spirits mingled in that throng
Of suffering martyrs[14]—steadfast men, who rose
In stern defence of right, opposing wrong,
And proof against the malice of their foes:—
Not on their own, but on their Country's woes
Intent—heroes were they, the true, the good;
Who, triumphing in faith, mid dying throes,
The tempter's offer of base life withstood, [blood!
And, glorying in their cause, confirmed it with their

* Taunton. † Kirke and Jeffries.

Digitized by Google

XXXII.

While prophecies went forth—the time would come,
Nor long, when, under heaven's all-righteous
The sons of Babylon would meet their doom, [sword,
And be aveng'd the servants of the Lord:—
Once more should Zion flourish, and the Word
In purity and strength prevail again;
The tyrant fly his throne, the blood that pour'd
So lavishly on Sedgmoor's sanguin'd plain
Would spring up into life, nor yet be shed in vain.

XXXIII.

The sun was sinking low—and evening threw
Her misty mantle o'er the landscape grey;
When slowly from that summit we withdrew,—
Where we had mus'd on Monmouth's fatal fray,—
Towards the soil of famous Athelney.
Thence on, by Parret's stream, a pleasant mile,
The good "King Alfred's Head" o'erlook'd the way;
And, as we rested 'neath its roof awhile,
Thus flowed the Story of that lone and ancient Isle.*

* See Second Canto, Part II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO FIRST CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 185.

While form'd to kindle up the patriot-flame,
Yon distant column tells of gallant Hood!

Erected on an eminence at Butleigh, between Glastonbury and Somerton.

Capt. Alex. Hood was nephew to Lords Bridport and Hood, and after distinguished service, was appointed to the command of the "Mars," 74; and whilst cruising between L'Orient and Brest, fell in with the French ship "Hercule," of equal force, which, after a most determined defence, surrendered to the "Mars." Capt. Hood received a musket-shot in the femoral artery, about twenty minutes after the action commenced, of which wound he died, on receiving the sword of the French captain, just as the action terminated.

NOTE II. Page 186.

And there, mid fertile plains, Ischalis rose,
By the same conquering hands—

"This very ancient town, which has scarcely left above ground sufficient vestiges to testify its former greatness, is

Digitized by Google

situated in a flat luxuriant soil upon the river Ivel, the ancient *velox* of Ravennas, at the distance of eighteen miles south from the city of Wells.

"The British name of this place, according to Nennius, was Caer-Pensabelcoit, which signifies the City at the head of the river's mouth in the wood, whence the Greeks called it Ισχαλις, and it is ranked by Ptolemy, in his Geography of Britain, the first town in the territory of the Belgæ:

Τοῖς δε Δοβυνοῖς, ΒΕΛΓΑΙ, καὶ πόλεις,
Ἴσχαλις
Ὕδατα θερμά
Οὐίντα.

"Its Roman name was *Ischalis*, and it was one of the most eminent stations that people possessed in all these parts. It was by them environed with a strong wall and deep ditch, which originally was filled with water from the river. Its form was an oblong square, standing upon the oblique points of the compass, the Fosse-road passing through it from north-east to south-west. The vestiges both of the wall and the ditch are in many places still discernible, the former being regularly composed of stone and brick work intermingled. The ditch on the north-west side forms a road anciently called *Zerde*, now Yard-lane, whence it runs through the Friary garden, and turning the angle, crosses the Fosse and the gardens at the back part of the town, where the wall is frequently discovered by the gardeners. Near it and within its whole *enceinte* have been found in almost every period Roman hypocausts and baths; gold, silver, and copper coins, particularly of Antoninus Pius, (on the reverse of some of which is Britannia sitting on a rock) of Trajan and Vespasian; urns, lachrymals, tesselated pavements, fibulas, bracelets, pateras, and almost every other relique of Romanity. Vast arches, and immense foundations of ancient buildings lie beneath the surface of the ground, and the entire

Digitized by Google

site of the old city is filled with subterranean ruins. There exists a tradition that it owed its demolition to fire, by matches tied to the tails of sparrows, let fly from Stannard-Cross Hill.

"The Saxons denominated the place *Ivelcestre*, or the fortified City upon the Ivel; and the Roman works not being totally erased, served them in their rencounters with the Britons and the Danes. At the coming in of the Normans it was a City of such considerable note as to contain within its walls one hundred and seven burgesses. * * * * * About this time Ivelchester seems to have retained its original strength and consequence in point of military concerns, having round it strong walls and large fortifications. For here it was that, A. D. 1088, the forces of Jeffrey, Bishop of Coutances, and William de Ewe, who had joined with Odo, Bishop of Bayeux; Eustace, Count of Boulogne; Robert, Earl of Morton; and other confederate Barons, to depose King William Rufus, and in his stead to place his brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, upon the throne, after having ravaged the counties of Wilts and Gloucester with unimpeded success, received such an effectual check from the bravery of the besieged inhabitants, as threw a fatal damp on all their future enterprises. From which time and circumstance the town of Ivelchester may, perhaps, date the era of its provincial aggrandisement."

The Author is induced to add the following brief notice of the celebrated Friar Bacon, from Collinson's Hist. of Somerset.

"In the Friary of Ivelchester was born, A. D. 1214, that celebrated philosopher, Roger Bacon, who was justly accounted the wonder of his age. His youthful education was had at Oxford, from which University he returned to Ivelchester with great acquisitions of classical knowledge, and there took the habit of a Franciscan Friar. He then applied himself to the study of philosophy, in which he made so great a proficiency that he was invited even to Paris, to assist in the translations of that University. Here he was admired and envied, and known too much in an invidious and vulgar age to prosper. The

Digitized by Google

occult sciences to which he applied drew the attention of those who had not the understanding to weigh uncommon aspections in the true scale of reason and philosophy, and they accused him of dealing with the devil. His own fraternity also caballed against him, and he was sometime confined in prison as a magician and sorcerer. When thence relieved he returned to Oxford, and there, in the College of Franciscans, spent the remainder of his days in study.

"He was well skilled in the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldaic languages; nor less in geography, chronology, and the *belles lettres;* but philosophy was the line in which he particularly shone. He was the first person that introduced chemistry into Europe. With regard to mechanics he has been styled the second Archimedes; and in optics was so well versed as to be generally allowed the first inventor of the telescope. In the unenlightened age in which he lived he was considered as a magician; in the present as a person wonderfully clear in his understanding, unbigotted in his principles, a friend to Christianity, and, by the freedom wherewith he imparted his discoveries, a well-wisher to his fellow creatures. He died A. D. 1294, and was buried in the house of the Grey Friars, at Oxford, in which City a tower, of no mean nor modern construction, till of late years stood distinguished by his name, wherein it is said he held his private lucubrations."—*Collinson.*

NOTE III. PAGE 187.

That ruin'd Abbey, famous in its day,

MUCHELNEY.—"The village of Muchelney is rendered memorable for its very ancient and rich Abbey; founded by Athelstan, King of the West Saxons, A. D. 939. That King,

Digitized by Google

in the earlier part of his reign, having given too implicit credit to certain false insinuations of the design of his brother Edwin against his life, caused him to be sent, with only one attendant, in an open boat into a stormy sea, where he perished in the waves. Repenting afterwards of this rash and cruel action, he is said by way of penance, to have shut himself up in a cell at Langport for seven years; and at the expiration of that term, as an atonement for that crime, to have founded in the adjacent village of Muchelney an abbey of Benedictine monks, which he dedicated to the honour of St. Peter and St. Paul. To this foundation, which by some is ascribed to King Ina, many monarchs were benefactors, both before and after the Norman Conquest."—*Collinson.*

NOTE IV. Page 188.

—that proud height,
For ever link'd with Chatham's glorious name;

On a bold ridge of hills, in the parish of Curry Rivel, stands Burton Pynsent, once the seat of the great Earl of Chatham.

"On the north-east point of this ridge, is a fine column of white stone, one hundred and forty feet high, built on a projecting knoll, with a steep declivity of more than three hundred feet down to the edge of the moor. This pillar* was erected by the late Earl of Chatham, to the memory of Sir William

* It was reported in the newspapers a few years since, that the then proprietor of the land would have pulled down this commemorative column, for its material, had not a few public-spirited individuals subscribed to purchase it. *Sic gloria mundi!*

Digitized by Google

Pynsent. On one side of this pedestal is the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of Sir William Pynsent.
"Hoc saltem fungar inani munere."

In the grounds is an urn of white marble, supported on a square basement. On the front is this inscription:

"Sacred to pure affection, this simple urn stands a witness of unceasing grief for him, who excelling in whatever is most admirable, and adding to the exercise of the sublimest virtues, the sweet charm of refined sentiment and polished wit; by gay and social converse, rendered beyond comparison happy the course of domestic life; and bestowed a felicity inexpressible on her, whose faithful love was blessed in a pure return, that raised her above every other joy but the parental one—and that still shared with him. His generous country, with public monuments, has eternized his fame. This humble tribute is but to soothe the sorrowing breast of private woe."

On the back,

"To the memory of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, this marble is inscribed by Hester, his beloved wife, 1781."

Burton Pynsent.—Sir William Pynsent, a gentleman of ancient family in Somersetshire, bequeathed to Mr. Pitt an estate, of nearly three thousand a year. In a letter to Lord Hertford, Horace Walpole says,—"Our important day, on the general warrants, is put off for a week, in compliment to Mr. Pitt's gout. Can it resist such attention? You have heard, to be sure, of the great fortune that is bequeathed to him by a Sir William Pynsent, an old man of nearly ninety, who quitted the world on the peace of Utrecht, and, luckily for Mr. Pitt, lived to be as angry with its *pendant*, the treaty of Paris. I did not

Digitized by Google

send you the first report, which mounted it to an enormous sum. I think the medium amount is two thousand a year, and thirty thousand pounds in money. This Sir William Pynsent—whose fame, like an aloe, did not blow till near a hundred—was a singularity."—*Correspondence of Earl Chatham.*

NOTE V. Page 190.

—He

Whose flag, in after-days, the breezes fanned,
For England's glory, over every sea;
Until the world outrang with Blake and Victory!

"One of the most intrepid and successful Admirals that have adorned the British Navy, was Robert Blake. He was born at Bridgwater, in August, 1598, and was the eldest son of Humphrey Blake, who, having acquired a considerable fortune as a Spanish merchant, purchased a small estate in that neighbourhood. He was educated at the free school of that place, until he was of age to be removed to Oxford, where he became successively a member of Alban Hall and Wadham College.

He returned to Bridgwater when he was about twenty-five years old, and lived quietly on his paternal estate till 1640, when he was returned member for his native place, in the short Parliament of April in that year.

On the breaking out of the Civil war he entered the Parliamentary army, and in 1643 was intrusted with the command of a fort at Bristol, when that City was besieged by the Royalists. He served afterwards in Somersetshire with good repute; and in 1644 was appointed Governor of Taunton, a place of great importance, as being the only Parliamentary

Digitized by Google

fortress in the West of England. In that capacity he gave eminent proof of skill, courage, and constancy, in maintaining the town during two successive sieges in 1645.

In February, 1649, Colonel Blake, in conjunction with Deane and Popham, two officers of the same rank, was appointed to command the fleet, for the military and naval services were not then kept separate and distinct as in later times; and for this new office Blake soon shewed signal capacity.

It would be inconsistent, with the necessary brevity of these biographical notices, to follow this heroic man through the numerous naval actions of his distinguished career, particularly against the Spaniards and the Dutch, as well as with the Tunisian corsairs; in all of which victory seems never to have deserted his flag. His last action appears to have been a bold and desperate attack of the Spanish Plate fleet, in the harbour of Santa Cruz, in the island of Teneriff; the whole of which he effectually destroyed.

"When the news of this success reached England, the Parliament immediately voted Blake a ring of the value of five hundred pounds, but it is probable he had not the satisfaction of receiving this token of his country's gratitude, for he died a few weeks after, on the 17th of August, on board the St. George, just as she was entering Plymouth Sound. He was in the fifty-ninth year of his age; and Cromwell, to testify his sorrow for his loss, caused his body to be buried with extraordinary magnificence in Westminster Abbey."

The Earl of Clarendon has left the following portrait of this great commander:—"That he was the first man that declined the old track, and made it manifest that the (naval) science might be attained in less time than was imagined; and despised those rules which had been long in practice, to keep his ship and men out of danger, which had been held in former times a point of great ability and circumspection, as if the principal art requisite in the captain of a ship had been to be sure to come home safe again. He was the first man who brought his ships

Digitized by Google

to contemn castles on shore, which have ever been thought very formidable, and were discovered by him to make a noise only, and to fright those who could be rarely hurt by them. He was the first who infused that proportion of courage into the seamen, by making them see by experience what mighty things they could do if they were resolved, and taught them to fight in fire as well as upon water; and though he has been very well imitated and followed, he was the first that gave the example of that kind of naval courage, and bold and resolute achievements."

NOTE VI. Page 190.

Hark! joyous shouts ascending rend the skies,
And the loud bells ring out a merry peal;
For Monmouth comes!

"On the morning of the eleventh of June the "Helderenbergh," accompanied by two smaller vessels, appeared off the port of Lyme. * * * The appearance of the three ships, foreign-built and without colours, perplexed the inhabitants; and the uneasiness increased when it was found that the Custom house officers, who had gone on board according to usage, did not return. The townspeople repaired to the cliffs, and gazed long and anxiously, but could find no solution to the mystery. At length seven boats pushed off from the largest of the strange vessels, and rowed to the shore. From these boats landed about eighty men, well armed and appointed. Among them were Monmouth, Grey, Fletcher, Ferguson, Wade, and Anthony Buyse, an officer who had been in the service of the Elector of Brandenburgh.

"Monmouth commanded silence, kneeled down on the shore, thanked God for having preserved the friends of liberty and

Digitized by Google

pure religion from the perils of the sea, and implored the divine blessing on what was yet to be done by land. He then drew his sword and led his men over the cliffs into the town.

"As soon as it was known under what leader and for what purpose the expedition came, the enthusiasm of the populace burst through all restraints. The little town was in an uproar with men running to and fro, and shouting 'A Monmouth, a Monmouth; the Protestant religion!' Meanwhile the ensign of the adventurers, a blue flag, was set up in the market place. The military stores were deposited in the town-hall, and a declaration setting forth the objects of the expedition was read from the Cross.

"After a skirmish between some of the invading force and a party of the Dorset militia, which had assembled at Bridport, Monmouth on his march through Axminster met a large body of the Devonshire trained bands under the Duke of Albemarle, Lord Lieutenant of the County, but on the insurgents assuming a resolute front, the latter doubting the fidelity of his men, ordered a retreat, which soon became a rout, and Monmouth continued his march upon Taunton, where he arrived on the eighteenth of June.

"While the Parliament," continues the historian,* "was devising sharp laws against Monmouth and his partisans, he found at Taunton a reception which might well encourage him to hope that his enterprise would have a prosperous issue. * * * Taunton was then an eminently prosperous place. Its markets were plentifully supplied. It was a celebrated seat of the woollen manufacture. The people boasted that they lived in a land flowing with milk and honey. Nor was this language held only by partial natives: for every stranger who climbed the graceful tower of St. Mary Magdalene, owned that he saw beneath him the most fertile of English vales. It was a country rich with orchards and green pastures, among which were

* Macaulay's Hist. of England, vol. i.

Digitized by Google

scattered, in gay abundance, manor houses, cottages, and village spires. The townsmen had long leaned towards Presbyterian divinity and Whig politics. In the great Civil War Taunton had, through all vicissitudes, adhered to the Parliament, had been twice closely besieged by Goring, and had been twice defended with heroic valour by Robert Blake, afterwards the renowned Admiral of the Commonwealth. Whole streets had been burned down by the mortars and grenades of the Cavaliers. Food had been so scarce, that the resolute Governor had announced his intention to put the garrison on rations of horse-flesh. But the spirit of the town had never been subdued either by fire or by hunger.

"The Restoration had produced no effect on the temper of the Taunton men. They had still continued to celebrate the anniversary of the happy day on which the siege laid to their town by the royal army had been raised; and their stubborn attachment to the old cause had excited so much fear and resentment at Whitehall, that, by a royal order, their moat had been filled up, and their wall demolished to the foundation. The puritanical spirit had been kept up to the height among them by the precepts and example of one of the most celebrated of the dissenting clergy, Joseph Alleine. Alleine was the author of a tract, entitled 'An Alarm to the Unconverted,' which is still popular both in England and in America. From the gaol to which he was consigned by the victorious Cavaliers, he addressed to his loving friends at Taunton many epistles breathing the spirit of a truly heroic piety. His frame soon sank under the effects of study, toil, and persecution; but his memory was long cherished with exceeding love and reverence by those whom he had exhorted and catechised.

"The children of the men who, forty years before, had manned the ramparts of Taunton against the Royalists, now welcomed Monmouth with transports of joy and affection. Every door and window was adorned with wreaths of flowers. No man appeared in the streets without wearing in his hat a

Digitized by Google

green bough, the badge of the popular cause. Damsels of the best families in the town wove colours for the insurgents. One flag in particular was embroidered gorgeously with emblems of royal dignity, and was offered to Monmouth by a train of young girls. He received the gift with the winning courtesy which distinguished him. The lady who headed the procession presented him also with a small Bible of great price. He took it with a shew of reverence. 'I come,' he said, 'to defend the truths contained in this book, and to seal them, if it must be so, with my blood.'

"Soon after the landing, a portion of his followers had earnestly pressed Monmouth to proclaim himself King; while others of a more republican spirit had opposed it. The subject was now revived, and ultimately decided in the affirmative.

"On the morning of the twentieth of June he was proclaimed in the market-place of Taunton. His followers repeated his new title with affectionate delight. But, as some confusion might have arisen if he had been called King James the Second, they commonly used the strange appellation of King Monmouth; and by this name their unhappy favourite was often mentioned in the western counties, within the memory of persons still living.

"Within twenty-four hours after he had assumed the royal title, he put forth several proclamations headed with his sign manual. By one of these he set a price on the head of his rival. Another declared the Parliament then sitting at Westminster an unlawful assembly, and commanded the members to disperse. The third forbade the people to pay taxes to the usurper. The fourth pronounced Albemarle a traitor."

Digitized by Google

NOTE VII. PAGE 192.

A few brief hours, and ancient Brugia saw,
With gladden'd shouts, advance rebellion's train;

"On the day following that on which Monmouth had assumed the royal title, he marched from Taunton to Bridgwater. His own spirits, it was remarked, were not high. The acclamations of the devoted thousands who surrounded him wherever he turned, could not dispel the gloom which sat on his brow. Those who had seen him during his progress through Somersetshire five years before, could not now observe without pity the traces of distress and anxiety on those soft and pleasing features which had won so many hearts.

"Bridgwater was one of the few towns which still had some Whig magistrates. The mayor and aldermen came in their robes to welcome the Duke, walked before him in procession to the high cross, and there proclaimed him King. His troops found excellent quarters, and were furnished with necessaries at little or no cost by the people of the town and neighbourhood. He took up his residence in the Castle, a building which had previously been honoured by royal visits. In the Castle field his army was encamped. It now consisted of about six thousand men, and might easily have been increased to double the number, but for the want of arms. The Duke had brought with him but a scanty supply of pikes and muskets. Many of his followers had, therefore, no other weapons than such as could be made out of the tools which they had used in husbandry or mining.

"The foot were divided into six regiments. Many of the men had been in the militia, and still wore their uniforms, red and yellow. The cavalry were about a thousand in number; but most of them had only large colts, such as were then bred in great herds on the marshes of Somersetshire, for the purpose of

Digitized by Google

supplying London with coach horses and cart horses. These animals were so far from being fit for any military purpose, that they had not yet learned to obey the bridle, and became ungovernable as soon as they heard a gun fired or a drum beaten. A small body guard of forty young men, well armed and mounted at their own charge, attended Monmouth. The people of Bridgwater, who were enriched by a thriving coast trade, furnished him with a small sum of money.

"All this time the forces of the Government were fast assembling. On the west of the rebel army Albemarle still kept together a large body of Devonshire militia. On the east the train bands of Wiltshire had mustered under the command of Thomas Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. On the north-east, Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, was in arms. * * * * But it was chiefly on the regular troops that the King relied. Churchill had been sent westward with the Blues; and Feversham was following with all the forces that could be spared from the neighbourhood of London.

"Meanwhile Monmouth advanced from Bridgwater, harassed through the whole march by Churchill, who appears to have done all that, with a handful of men, it was possible for a brave and skilful officer to effect. The rebel army, much annoyed both by the enemy and by a heavy fall of rain, halted in the evening of the twenty-second of June at Glastonbury. The houses of the little town did not afford shelter for so large a force. Some of the troops were, therefore, quartered in the churches, and others lighted their fires among the venerable ruins of the Abbey, once the wealthiest religious house in our island. From Glastonbury the Duke marched to Wells, and from Wells to Shepton Mallet.

"Hitherto he seems to have wandered from place to place with no other design than that of collecting troops. It was now necessary for him to form some plan of military operations. His first scheme was to seize Bristol."

We must refer the reader to any of the various historical

Digitized by Google

accounts for a particular detail of Monmouth's movements until his return to Bridgwater; merely stating that after marching through Pensford to Keynsham, the King's forces being near at hand, the design upon Bristol was relinquished. He then proceeded eastward with the view of entering Wiltshire, and summoned Bath on his way, but Bath was strongly garrisoned for the King, and Feversham was fast approaching. The rebels, therefore, made no attempt on the walls, but hastened to Philip's Norton, where they halted on the evening of the twenty-sixth of June. Here a skirmish took place with the advanced guard of the Royal army, which lost a hundred men killed or wounded.

"The advanced guard thus repulsed, fell back on the main body of the royal forces. The two armies were now face to face; and a few shots were exchanged that did little or no execution. Neither side was impatient to come to action. Feversham did not wish to fight till his artillery came up, and fell back to Bradford. Monmouth, as soon as the night closed in, quitted his position, marched southward, and by daybreak arrived at Frome, where he hoped to find reinforcements.

"Frome was as zealous in his cause as either Taunton or Bridgwater, but could do nothing to serve him. * * * The rebel army was in evil case. The march of the preceding night had been wearisome. The rain had fallen in torrents; and the roads had been mere quagmires. Nothing was heard of the promised succours from Wiltshire. One messenger brought news that Argyle's forces had been dispersed in Scotland. Another reported that Feversham, having been joined by his artillery, was about to advance. Monmouth understood war too well not to know that his followers, with all their courage and all their zeal, were no match for regular soldiers. He had till lately flattered himself with the hope that some of those regiments which he had formerly commanded would pass over to his standard; but that hope he was now compelled to relinquish. His heart failed him. He could scarcely muster firmness enough to give orders. In his misery he complained

Digitized by Google

bitterly of the evil counsellers who had induced him to quit his happy retreat in Brabant. Against Wildman, in particular, he broke forth in violent imprecations. And now an ignominious thought rose in his weak and agitated mind. He would leave to the mercy of the Government the thousands who had at his call, and for his sake, abandoned their quiet fields and dwellings. He would steal away with his chief officers, would gain some seaport before his flight was suspected, would escape to the Continent, and would forget his ambition and his shame in the arms of Lady Wentworth. He seriously discussed this scheme with his leading advisers. Some of them, trembling for their necks, listened to it with approbation; but Grey, who, by the admission of his detractors, was intrepid everywhere except when swords were clashing and guns going off around him, opposed the dastardly proposition with great ardour, and implored the Duke to face every danger rather than requite with ingratitude and treachery the devoted attachment of the western peasantry.

"The scheme of flight was abandoned; but it was not now easy to form any plan for a campaign. * * * At this juncture a report reached the camp that the rustics of the marshes, near Axbridge, had risen in defence of the Protestant religion, had armed themselves with flails, bludgeons, and pitch-forks, and were assembling by thousands at Bridgwater. Monmouth determined to return thither, and to strengthen himself with these new allies."

NOTE VIII. PAGE 193.

Ten days had passed, and Parret now beheld
That rebel host returning o'er his tide;

"On Thursday, the second of July, Monmouth again entered Bridgwater, in circumstances far less cheering than those in

Digitized by Google

which he had marched thence ten days before. The reinforcement which he found there was inconsiderable. The royal army was close upon him. At one moment he thought of fortifying the town; and hundreds of labourers were summoned to dig trenches and throw up mounds. Then his mind recurred to the plan of marching into Cheshire, a plan which he had rejected as impracticable when he was at Keynsham, and which assuredly was not more practicable now that he was at Bridgwater.

"While he was thus wavering between projects equally hopeless, the King's forces came in sight. They consisted of about two thousand five hundred regular troops, and of about fifteen hundred of the Wiltshire militia. Early on the morning of Sunday, the fifth of July, they left Somerton, and pitched their tents that day about three miles from Bridgwater, on the plain of Sedgmoor.

"The steeple of the parish church of Bridgwater is said to be the loftiest in Somersetshire, and commands a wide view over the surrounding country. Monmouth, accompanied by some of his officers, went up to the top of the square tower from which the spire ascends, and observed through a telescope the position of the enemy. Beneath him lay a flat expanse, now rich with corn fields and apple trees, but then, as its name imports, for the most part a dreary morass. When the rains were heavy, and the Parret and its tributary streams rose above their banks, this tract was often flooded. It was indeed anciently part of that great swamp, renowned in our early chronicles as having arrested the progress of two successive races of invaders. It had long protected the Celts against the aggressions of the Kings of Wessex; and it had sheltered Alfred from the pursuit of the Danes. In those remote times this region could be traversed only in boats. It was a vast pool, wherein were scattered many islets of shifting and treacherous soil, overhung with rank jungle, and swarming with deer and wild swine. Even in the days of the Tudors, the traveller, whose journey

Digitized by Google

lay from Ilchester to Bridgwater, was forced to make a circuit of several miles in order to avoid the waters. When Monmouth looked upon Sedgmoor, it had partially been reclaimed by art, and was intersected by many deep and wide trenches, which, in that country, are called rhines. In the midst of the moor rose, clustering round the towers of churches, a few villages, of which the names seem to indicate that they once were surrounded by waves. In one of these villages, called Weston Zoyland, the royal cavalry lay; and Feversham had fixed his head-quarters there. Many persons still living have seen the daughter of the servant girl who waited on him that day at table; and a large dish of Persian ware, which was set before him, is still carefully preserved in the neighbourhood. It is to be observed that the population of Somersetshire does not, like that of the manufacturing districts, consist of emigrants from distant places. It is by no means unusual to find farmers who cultivate the same land which their ancestors cultivated when the Plantagenets reigned in England. The Somersetshire traditions are, therefore, of no small value to an historian.

"At a greater distance from Bridgwater lies the village of Middlezoy. In that village and its neighbourhood, the Wiltshire militia were quartered, under the command of Pembroke.

"On the open moor, not far from Chedzoy, were encamped several battalions of regular infantry. Monmouth looked gloomily on them. He could not but remember how, a few years before, he had, at the head of a column composed of some of those very men, driven before him in confusion the fierce enthusiasts who defended Bothwell bridge. He could distinguish among the hostile ranks that gallant band which was then called, from the name of its colonel, Dumbarton's regiment, but which has long been known as the first of the line, and which, in all the four quarters of the world, has nobly supported its early reputation. 'I know those men,' said Monmouth; 'they will fight. If I had but them, all would go well.'

"Yet the aspect of the enemy was not altogether discourag-

Digitized by Google

ing. The three divisions of the royal army lay far apart from one another. There was an appearance of negligence and of relaxed discipline in all their movements. It was reported that they were drinking themselves drunk, with the Zoyland cider. The incapacity of Feversham, who commanded in chief, was notorious. Even at this momentous crisis he thought only of eating and sleeping. Churchill was indeed a captain equal to tasks far more arduous than that of scattering a crowd of ill-armed and ill-trained peasants. But the genius which, at a later period, humbled six Marshals of France, was not now in its proper place. Feversham told Churchill little, and gave him no encouragement to offer any suggestion. The lieutenant, conscious of superior abilities and science, impatient of the control of a chief whom he despised, and trembling for the fate of the army, nevertheless preserved his characteristic self-command, and dissembled his feelings so well, that Feversham praised his submissive alacrity, and promised to report it to the King.

"Monmouth having observed the disposition of the royal forces, and having been apprised of the state in which they were, conceived that a night attack might be attended with success. He resolved to run the hazard, and preparations were instantly made."

NOTE IX. Page 194.

It was the Sabbath—and the rebels lay
Meanwhile encamp'd upon the Castle-field;

"It was Sunday; and his followers, who had, for the most part, been brought up after the Puritan fashion, passed a great part of the day in religious exercises. The Castle-field, in which the army was encamped, presented a spectacle such

Digitized by Google

as, since the disbanding of Cromwell's soldiers, England had never seen. The dissenting preachers who had taken arms against Popery, and some of whom had probably fought in the great Civil War, prayed and preached in red coats and huge jackboots, with swords by their sides. Ferguson was one of those who harangued. He took for his text the awful imprecation by which the Israelites who dwelt beyond Jordan cleared themselves from the charge ignorantly brought against them by their brethren on the other side of the river—'The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knoweth; and Israel he shall know. If it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day.' "

NOTE X. Page 194.

But as the night advanced, quick stir arose
Among the thousands congregated there;

"And now the time for the great hazard drew near. The night was not ill-suited for such an enterprise. The moon was indeed at the full, and the northern streamers were shining brilliantly. But the marsh fog lay so thick on Sedgmoor, that no object could be discerned there at the distance of fifty paces.

"The clock struck eleven; and the Duke with his body guard rode out of the castle. He was not in the frame of mind which befits one who is about to strike a decisive blow. The very children, who pressed to see him pass, observed, and long remembered, that his look was sad, and full of evil augury. His army marched by a circuitous path, near six miles in length, towards the royal encampment on Sedgmoor. Part of the route is to this day called War Lane. The foot were led by Monmouth himself. The horse were confided to Grey, in

Digitized by Google

spite of the remonstrances of some who remembered the mishap at Bridport. Orders were given that strict silence should be preserved, that no drum should be beaten, and no shot fired. The word, by which the insurgents were to recognise one another in the darkness, was Soho. It had doubtless been selected in allusion to Soho Fields, in London, where their leader's palace stood.

"About one in the morning of Monday, the sixth of July, the rebels were on the open moor. But between them and the enemy lay three broad rhines, filled with water and soft mud. Two of them, called the Black Ditch and the Langmoor Rhine, Monmouth knew that he must pass. But, strange to say, the existence of a trench, called the Bussex Rhine, which immediately covered the royal encampment, had not been mentioned to him by any of his scouts.

"The wains, which carried the ammunition, remained at the entrance of the moor. The horse and foot, in a long narrow column, passed the Black Ditch by a causeway. There was a similar causeway across the Langmoor Rhine: but the guide, in the fog, missed his way. There was some delay and some tumult before the error could be rectified. At length the passage was effected; but, in the confusion, a pistol went off. Some men of the Horse Guards, who were on the watch, heard the report, and perceived that a great multitude was advancing through the mist. They fired their carbines, and galloped off in different directions to give the alarm. Some hastened to Weston Zoyland, where the cavalry lay. One trooper spurred to the encampment of the infantry, and cried out vehemently that the enemy was at hand. The drums of Dumbarton's regiment beat to arms; and the men got fast into their ranks. It was time; for Monmouth was already drawing up his army for action. He ordered Grey to lead the way with the cavalry, and followed himself at the head of the infantry. Grey pushed on till his progress was unexpectedly arrested by the Bussex Rhine. On the opposite side of the ditch the King's foot were hastily forming in order of battle.

Digitized by Google

"'For whom are you?' called out an officer of the Foot Guards. 'For the King,' replied a voice from the ranks of the rebel cavalry. 'For which King?' was then demanded. The answer was a shout of 'King Monmouth!' mingled with the war cry which, forty years before, had been inscribed on the colours of the Parliamentary regiments, 'God with us.' The royal troops instantly fired such a volley of musketry as sent the rebel horse flying in all directions. The world agreed to ascribe this ignominious rout to Grey's pusillanimity. Yet it is by no means clear that Churchill would have succeeded better at the head of men who had never before handled arms on horseback, and whose horses were unused, not only to stand fire, but to obey the rein.

"A few minutes after the Duke's horse had dispersed themselves over the moor, his infantry came up running fast, and guided through the gloom by the lighted matches of Dumbarton's regiment.

"Monmouth was startled by finding that a broad and profound trench lay between him and the camp which he had hoped to surprise. The insurgents halted on the edge of the rhine and fired. Part of the royal infantry on the opposite bank returned the fire. During three quarters of an hour the roar of the musketry was incessant. The Somersetshire peasants behaved themselves as if they had been veteran soldiers, save only that they levelled their pieces too high.

"But now the other divisions of the royal army were in motion. The Life Guards and Blues came pricking fast from Weston Zoyland, and scattered in an instant some of Grey's horse, who had attempted to rally. The fugitives spread a panic among their comrades in the rear, who had charge of the ammunition. The waggoners drove off at full speed, and never stopped till they were many miles from the field of battle. Monmouth had hitherto done his part like a stout and able warrior. He had been seen on foot, pike in hand, encouraging his infantry by voice and by example. But he was too well

Digitized by Google

acquainted with military affairs not to know that all was over. His men had lost the advantage which surprise and darkness had given them. They were deserted by the horse and by the ammunition waggons. The King's forces were now united and in good order. Feversham had been awakened by the firing, had got out of bed, had adjusted his cravat, had looked at himself well in the glass, and had come to see what his men were doing. Meanwhile, what was of much more importance, Churchill had rapidly made an entire new disposition of the royal infantry. The day was about to break. The event of a conflict on an open plain, by broad sunlight, could not be doubtful. Yet Monmouth should have felt that it was not for him to fly, while thousands, whom affection for him had hurried to destruction, were still fighting manfully in his cause. But vain hopes and the intense love of life prevailed. He saw that if he tarried, the royal cavalry would soon intercept his retreat. He mounted and rode from the field.

"Yet his foot, though deserted, made a gallant stand. The Life Guards attacked them on the right, the Blues on the left; but the Somersetshire clowns, with their scythes and the butends of their muskets, faced the royal horse like old soldiers. Oglethorpe made a vigorous attempt to break them, and was manfully repulsed. Sarsfield, a brave Irish officer, whose name afterwards obtained a melancholy celebrity, charged on the other flank. His men were beaten back. He was himself struck to the ground, and lay for a time as one dead. But the struggle of the hardy rustics could not last. Their powder and ball were spent. Cries were heard of 'ammunition! for God's sake, ammunition!' But no ammunition was at hand. And now the King's artillery came up. It had been posted half a mile off, on the high road from Weston Zoyland to Bridgwater. * * * * * The cannon, though ill served, brought the engagement to a speedy close. The pikes of the rebel battalions began to shake; the ranks broke; the King's cavalry charged again, and bore down everything before them; the King's

Digitized by Google

infantry came pouring across the ditch. Even in that extremity the Mendip miners stood bravely to their arms, and sold their lives dearly. But the rout was in a few minutes complete. Three hundred of the soldiers had been killed or wounded. Of the rebels more than a thousand lay dead on the moor.

"So ended the last fight, deserving the name of battle, that has been fought on English ground. The impression left on the simple inhabitants of the neighbourhood was deep and lasting. That impression, indeed, has been frequently renewed. For even in our own time the plough and the spade have not seldom turned up ghastly memorials of the slaughter; skulls, and thigh bones, and strange weapons made out of implements of husbandry. Old peasants related very recently that, in their childhood, they were accustomed to play on the moor at the fight between King James's men and King Monmouth's men, and that King Monmouth's men always raised the cry of Soho."

NOTE XI. Page 196.

While pale Defeat led on the rebels' flight,
And Monmouth from the field was seen to ride:

"Meanwhile Monmouth, accompanied by Grey, by Buyse, and by a few other friends, was flying from the field of battle. At Chedzoy he stopped a moment to mount a fresh horse, and to hide his blue riband and his George. He then hastened towards the Bristol Channel. From the rising ground on the north of the field of battle he saw the flash and the smoke of the last volley fired by his deserted followers. Before six o'clock he was twenty miles from Sedgmoor."

After proceeding to some distance westward, the unfortunate Duke, and two or three friends, turned and pursued a south-

Digitized by Google

easterly course into Dorsetshire; crossed Cranbourn Chase, making their way for the New Forest, and were taken by Sir William Portman, Lord Lumley, and others, in the parish of Horton, near Ringwood, a day or two after the battle.

NOTE XII. Page 197.

The morning dawn'd—and Brugia saw again—
How chang'd the scene from that of yesternight!—
Those zealous thousands hurrying from the plain.

"It was four o'clock; the sun was rising; and the routed army came pouring into the streets of Bridgwater. The uproar, the blood, the gashes, the ghastly figures which sank down and never rose again, spread horror and dismay through the town. The pursuers too were close behind. Those inhabitants who had favoured the insurrection expected sack and massacre, and implored the protection of their neighbours who professed the Roman Catholic religion, or had made themselves conspicuous by Tory politics; and it is acknowledged by the bitterest of Whig historians that this protection was kindly and generously given.

"During that day the conquerors continued to chase the fugitives. The neighbouring villagers long remembered with what a clatter of horsehoofs, and what a storm of curses the whirlwind of cavalry swept by. Before evening five hundred prisoners had been crowded into the parish church of Weston Zoyland. Eighty of them were wounded; and five expired within the consecrated walls. Great numbers of labourers were impressed for the purpose of burying the slain. A few, who were notoriously partial to the vanquished side, were set apart for the hideous office of quartering the captives. The tithing

Digitized by Google

men of the neighbouring parishes were busied in setting up gibbets and providing chains. All this while the bells of Weston Zoyland and Chedzoy rang joyously, and the soldiers sang and rioted on the moor amid the corpses. For the farmers of the neighbourhood had made haste, as soon as the event of the fight was known, to send hogsheads of their best cider as peace offerings to the victors.

"Feversham passed for a goodnatured man; but he was a foreigner, ignorant of the laws and careless of the feelings of the English. He was accustomed to the military license of France, and had learned from his great kinsman, the conqueror of the Palatinate, not indeed how to conquer, but how to devastate. A considerable number of prisoners were immediately selected for execution. Among them was a youth famous for his speed. Hopes were held out to him that his life would be spared if he could run a race with one of the colts of the marsh. The space through which the man kept up with the horse is still marked by well known bounds on the moor, and is about three quarters of a mile. Feversham was not ashamed, after seeing the performance, to send the wretched performer to the gallows. The next day a long line of gibbets appeared on the road leading from Bridgwater to Weston Zoyland. On each gibbet a prisoner was suspended. Four of the sufferers were left to rot in irons."

NOTE XIII. Page 198.

Hell doth not hold, throughout its realms, a pair
Of demons half so dark as those who bore
Dominion o'er that scene—

"While the execution of Monmouth occupied the thoughts of the Londoners, the counties which had risen against the

Digitized by Google

Government were enduring all that a ferocious soldiery could inflict. Feversham had been summoned to the Court, where honours and rewards, which he little deserved, awaited him. * * * * He left in command at Bridgwater Colonel Percy Kirke, a military adventurer whose vices had been developed by the worst of all schools, Tangier. Kirke had during some years commanded the garrison of that town, and had been constantly employed in hostilities against tribes of foreign barbarians, ignorant of the laws which regulate the warfare of civilized and Christian nations. Within the ramparts of his fortress he was a despotic prince. The only check on his tyranny was the fear of being called to account by a distant and a careless Government. He might therefore safely proceed to the most audacious excesses of rapacity, licentiousness, and cruelty.

"When Tangier was abandoned, Kirke returned to England. He still continued to command his old soldiers, who were designated sometimes as the First Tangier Regiment. And sometimes as Queen Katherine's Regiment. As they had been levied for the purpose of waging war on an infidel nation, they bore on their flag a Christian emblem, the Paschal Lamb. In allusion to this device, and with a bitterly ironical meaning, these men, the rudest and most ferocious in the English army, were called Kirke's Lambs.

"Such was the captain and such the soldiers who were now let loose on the people of Somersetshire. From Bridgwater, Kirke marched to Taunton. He was accompanied by two carts filled with wounded rebels, whose gashes had not been dressed, and by a long drove of prisoners on foot, who were chained two and two: several of these he hanged as soon as he reached Taunton, without the form of a trial. They were not suffered even to take leave of their nearest relations. The sign post of the *White Hart Inn* served as a gallows. It is said that the work of death went on in sight of the windows where the officers of the Tangier Regiment were carousing, and that at

Digitized by Google

every health a wretch was turned off. When the legs of the dying men quivered in the last agony, the colonel ordered the drums to strike up. He would give the rebels, he said, music to their dancing. The tradition runs that one of the captives was not even allowed the indulgence of a speedy death. Twice he was suspended from the sign post, and twice cut down. Twice he was asked if he repented of his treason; and twice he replied that, if the thing were to do again, he would do it. Then he was tied up for the last time. So many dead bodies were quartered that the executioner stood ankle deep in blood. He was assisted by a poor man whose loyalty was suspected, and who was compelled to ransom his own life by seething the remains of his friends in pitch. The peasant who had consented to perform this hideous office, afterwards returned to his plough. But a mark like that of Cain was upon him. He was known through his village by the horrible name of Tom Boilman. The rustics long continued to relate that, though he had, by his sinful and shameful deed, saved himself from the vengeance of the Lambs, he had not escaped the vengeance of a higher power. In a great storm he fled for shelter under an oak, and was there struck dead by lightning.

"Cruelty, however, was not this man's (Kirke's) only passion. He loved money; and was no novice in the arts of extortion. A safe conduct might be bought of him for thirty or forty pounds; and such a safe conduct, though of no value in law, enabled the purchaser to pass the posts of the Lambs without molestation, to reach a seaport, and to fly to a foreign country. The ships which were bound for New England were crowded at this juncture with so many fugitives from Sedgmoor, that there was great danger lest the water and provisions should fail.

"The Government was dissatisfied with Kirke, not on account of the barbarity with which he had treated his needy prisoners, but on account of the interested lenity which he had shown to rich delinquents. He was soon recalled from the West. A less

Digitized by Google

irregular, and, at the same time, a more cruel massacre was about to be perpetrated. The vengeance was deferred during some weeks. It was thought desirable that the Western Circuit should not begin till the other circuits had terminated. In the meantime the gaols of Somersetshire and Dorsetshire were filled with thousands of captives. The chief friend and protector of these unhappy men in their extremity was one who abhorred their religious and political opinions, one whose order they hated, and to whom they had done unprovoked wrong, Bishop Ken. That good prelate used all his influence to soften the gaolers, and retrenched from his own episcopal state, that he might be able to make some addition to the coarse and scanty fare of those who had defaced his beloved cathedral. His conduct on this occasion was of a piece with his whole life. His intellect was indeed darkened by many superstitions and prejudices, but his moral character, when impartially reviewed, sustains a comparison with any in ecclesiastical history, and seems to approach, as near as human infirmity permits, to the ideal perfection of Christian virtue.*

"His labour of love was of no long duration. A rapid and effectual gaol delivery was at hand. Early in September, Jeffreys, accompanied by four other judges, set out on that circuit, of which the memory will last as long as our race and language."

In Hampshire the Lady Alice Lisle was the only victim. But in Dorsetshire two hundred and ninety-two received sentence of death, of whom seventy-four were executed.

"From Dorchester Jeffreys proceeded to Exeter. The Civil War had barely grazed the frontier of Devonshire. Here, therefore, comparatively few persons were capitally punished. Somersetshire, the chief seat of the rebellion, had been reserved

* The Author is glad of the occasion to introduce the above eulogium on Bishop Ken, from the eloquent pen of Lord Macaulay: the more so, as he had no opportunity of noticing the worthy prelate, who was a native of Somerset, and, we believe, born at Kenn, about two miles from Clevedon.

Digitized by Google

for the last and most fearful vengeance. In this County two hundred and thirty-three prisoners were in a few days hanged, drawn, and quartered. At every spot where two roads met, on every market place, on the green of every large village which had furnished Monmouth with soldiers, ironed corpses clattering in the wind, or heads and quarters stuck on poles, poisoned the air, and made the traveller sick with horror. In many parishes the peasantry could not assemble in the house of God without seeing the ghastly face of a neighbour grinning at them over the porch. The Chief Justice was all himself. His spirits rose higher and higher as the work went on. He laughed, shouted, joked, and swore in such a way, that many thought him drunk from morning to night. * * * * It was not only on the prisoners his fury broke forth: gentlemen and noblemen of high consideration and stainless loyalty, who ventured to bring to his notice any extenuating circumstance, were almost sure to receive what he called, in the coarse dialect which he had learned in the pothouses of Whitechapel, 'a lick with the rough side of his tongue.' Lord Stowell, a Tory peer, who could not conceal his horror at the remorseless manner in which his poor neighbours were butchered, was punished by having a corpse suspended in chains at his park gate. In such spectacles originated many tales of terror, which were long told, over the cider, by the Christmas fires of the farmers of Somersetshire. Within the last forty years, peasants, in some districts, well knew the accursed spots, and passed them unwillingly after sunset. * * * * The number of the rebels whom Jeffreys hanged on this circuit was three hundred and twenty."

Digitized by Google

NOTE XIV. Page 198.

And noble spirits mingled in that throng
Of suffering martyrs—

"Such havoc must have excited disgust, even if the sufferers had been generally odious. But they were, for the most part, men of blameless life, and of high religious profession. They were regarded by themselves, and by a large proportion of their neighbours, not as wrong doers, but as martyrs who sealed with their blood the truth of the Protestant religion. Very few of the convicts professed any repentance for what they had done. Many, animated by the old Puritan spirit, met death, not merely with fortitude, but with exultation. It was in vain the ministers of the Established Church lectured them on the guilt of rebellion, and on the importance of priestly absolution. The claim of the King to unbounded authority in things temporal, and the claim of the clergy to the spiritual power of binding and loosing, moved the bitter scorn of the intrepid sectaries. Some of them composed hymns in the dungeon, and chanted them on the fatal sledge. Christ, they sang, while they were undressing for the butchery, would soon come to rescue Zion, and to make war on Babylon, would set up His standard, would blow His trumpet, and would requite his foes tenfold for all the evil which had been inflicted on His servants. The dying words of these men were noted down; and, in this way, with the help of some invention and exaggeration, was formed a copious supplement to the Marian martyrology.

"A few cases deserve special mention. Abraham Holmes, a retired officer of the Parliamentary army, and one of those zealots who would own no king but King Jesus, had been taken at Sedgmoor. His arm had been frightfully mangled and shattered in the battle; and, as no surgeon was at hand, the stout old soldier amputated it himself. He was carried up to

Digitized by Google

London, and examined by the King in Council, but would make no submission. 'I am an aged man,' he said, 'and what remains to me of life is not worth a falsehood or a baseness. I have always been a republican, and I am so still.' He was sent back to the West and hanged. The people remarked with awe and wonder that the beasts which were to drag him to the gallows became restive and went back. Holmes himself doubted not that the angel of the Lord, as in the old time, stood in the way, sword in hand, invisible to human eyes, but visible to the inferior animals. 'Stop, gentlemen,' he cried, 'let me go on foot. There is more in this than you think. Remember how the ass saw Him whom the prophet could not see.' He walked manfully to the gallows, harangued the people with a smile, prayed fervently that God would hasten the downfall of Antichrist and the deliverance of England, and went up the ladder with an apology for mounting so awkwardly. 'You see,' he said, 'I have but one arm.'

"Not less courageously died Christopher Battiscombe, a young Templar of good family and fortune, who, at Dorchester, an agreeable provincial town proud of its taste and refinement, was regarded by all as the model of a fine gentleman. Great interest was made to save him. It was believed through the West of England that he was engaged to a young lady of gentle blood, the sister of the Sheriff, that she threw herself at the feet of Jeffreys to beg for mercy, and that Jeffreys drove her from him with a jest so hideous that to repeat it would be an offence against decency and humanity. Her lover suffered at Lyme, piously and courageously.

"A still deeper interest was excited by the fate of two gallant brothers, William and Benjamin Hewling. They were young, handsome, accomplished, and well connected. Their maternal grandfather was named Kiffin. He was one of the first merchants in London, and was generally considered the head of the Baptists. The Chief Justice behaved to William Hewling on the trial with characteristic brutality. 'You have a grand-

Digitized by Google

father,' he said, 'who deserves to be hanged as richly as you.' The poor lad, who was only nineteen, suffered death with so much meekness and fortitude, that an officer of the army who attended the execution, and who had made himself remarkable by rudeness and severity, was strangely melted, and said, 'I do not believe that my Lord Chief Justice himself could be proof against this.' Hopes were entertained that Benjamin would be pardoned. One victim of tender years was surely enough for one house to furnish. Even Jeffreys was, or pretended to be, inclined to lenity. The truth was, that one of his kinsmen, from whom he had large expectations, and whom, therefore, he could not treat as he generally treated intercessors, pleaded strongly for the afflicted family. Time was allowed for a reference to London. The sister of the prisoner went to Whitehall with a petition. Many courtiers wished her success; and Churchill, among whose numerous faults cruelty had no place, obtained admittance for her. 'I wish well to your suit with all my heart,' he said, 'as they stood together in the antichamber; but do not flatter yourself with hopes. This marble,' and he laid his hand on the chimney-piece, 'is not harder than the King.' The prediction proved true. James was inexorable. Benjamin Hewling died with dauntless courage, amidst lamentations, in which the soldiers who kept guard round the gallows could not refrain from joining.

"Yet those rebels who were doomed to death were less to be pitied than some of the survivors. Several prisoners to whom Jeffreys was unable to bring home the charge of high treason, were convicted of misdemeanors, and were sentenced to scourging not less terrible than those which Oates had undergone.

"The number of prisoners whom Jeffreys transported was eight hundred and forty-one. These men, more wretched than their associates who suffered death, were distributed into gangs, and bestowed on persons who enjoyed favour at court. The conditions of the gifts were that the convicts should be carried beyond sea as slaves, that they should not be emancipated for

Digitized by Google

ten years, and that the place of their banishment should be some West Indian island. This last article was studiously framed for the purpose of aggravating the misery of the exiles. In New England or New Jersey they would have found a population kindly disposed to them, and a climate not unfavourable to their health and vigour. It was therefore determined that they should be sent to Colonies where a Puritan could hope to inspire little sympathy, and where a labourer, born in the temperate zone, could hope to enjoy little health. Such was the state of the slave market that these bondmen, long as was the passage, and sickly as they were likely to prove, were still very valuable. It was estimated by Jeffreys that, on an average, each of them, after all charges were paid, would be worth from ten to fifteen pounds. There was therefore much angry competition for grants. Some Tories in the West conceived that they had, by their exertions and sufferings during the insurrection, earned a right to share in the profits which had been eagerly snatched up by the sycophants of Whitehall. The courtiers, however, were victorious.

"The misery of the exiles fully equalled that of the negroes who are now carried from Congo to Brazil. It appears from the best information, which is at present accessible, that more than one fifth of those who were shipped were flung to the sharks before the end of the voyage. The human cargoes were stowed close in the holds of small vessels. So little space was allowed, that the wretches, many of whom were still tormented by unhealed wounds, could not lie down at once without lying on one another. They were never suffered to go on deck. The hatchway was constantly watched by sentinels armed with hangers and blunderbusses. In the dungeon below all was darkness, stench, lamentation, disease, and death. Of ninety-nine convicts who were carried out in one vessel, twenty-two died before they reached Jamaica, although the voyage was performed with unusual speed. The survivors when they arrived at their house of bondage were mere skeletons. During

Digitized by Google

some weeks coarse biscuit and fetid water had been doled out to them in such scanty measure that any one of them could easily have consumed the ration which was assigned to five. They were, therefore, in such a state that the merchant to whom they had been consigned found it expedient to fatten them before selling them.

"Meanwhile the property both of the rebels who had suffered death, and of those more unfortunate men who were withering under the tropical sun, was fought for and torn in pieces by a crowd of greedy informers. By law a subject attainted of treason forfeits all his substance; and this law was enforced, after the 'Bloody Assizes,' with a rigour at once cruel and ludicrous. The broken-hearted widows and destitute orphans of the labouring men whose corpses hung at the cross roads, were called upon by the agents of the Treasury to explain what had become of a basket, a goose, of a flitch of bacon, of a keg of cider, of a sack of beans, of a truss of hay.* While the humbler retainers of the Government were pillaging the families of the slaughtered peasants, the Chief Justice was fast accumulating a fortune out of the plunder of a higher class of Whigs. He traded largely in pardons. His most lucrative transaction of this kind was with a gentleman named Edmund Prideaux. It is certain that Prideaux had not been in arms against the Government; and it is probable that his only crime was the wealth which he had inherited from his father, an eminent lawyer, who had been high in office under the Protector. No exertions were spared to make out a case for the crown. Mercy was offered to some prisoners on condition that they would bear evidence against Prideaux. The unfortunate man lay long in gaol, and at length, overcome by the fear of the gallows, consented to pay fifteen thousand pounds for his liberation. This great sum was received by Jeffreys. He bought with it an

* In the Treasury records of the autumn of 1685 are several letters directing search to be made for trifles of this sort!—*Macaulay's Hist.*

Digitized by Google

estate, to which the people gave the name of Aceldama, from that accursed field which was purchased with the price of innocent blood.

"No English sovereign has ever given stronger proof of a cruel nature than James the Second. Yet his cruelty was not more odious than his mercy. Or perhaps it may be more correct to say that his mercy and his cruelty were such, that each reflects infamy on the other. Our horror at the fate of the simple clowns, the young lads, the delicate women, to whom he was inexorably severe, is increased when we find to whom and for what considerations he granted his pardon."—*Macaulay's Hist. Eng.*

[The Queen requested the gift of one hundred of the wretched men who were transported, by the sale of whom it was calculated she cleared a thousand guineas. Her maids of honour also received her permission to extort a ransom from the parents of the young girls who welcomed Monmouth into Taunton, and actually received a considerable sum from them.]

The following particulars of the unfortunate Duke's discovery and arrest at the end of his flight from the field of Sedgmoor, may prove interesting:—

"On a large heath, called Shag's Heath, about a mile and a half from Woodlands, in Horton parish, Dorsetshire, is an ash tree, under which the unfortunate Duke was apprehended. The tradition of the neighbourhood is, that after the defeat of Sedgmoor, the Duke and Lord Lumley* quitted their horses at Woodyeats; whence the former, disguised as a peasant, wandered hither. He dropped his gold snuff box in a pea field; where it was afterwards found full of gold pieces, and brought to Mrs. Uvedale, of Horton. One of the finders had fifteen pounds for half the contents or value of it. The Duke went on to the island, as it is called, a cluster of small farms in the

* There is some mistake here. It should have been Lord Grey. Lumley commanded the Sussex militia, then lying at Ringwood.—D.

Digitized by Google

middle of the heath, and there concealed himself in a deep ditch under the ash.

"When the pursurers came up, a woman who lived in a cot, gave information of his being somewhere in the island, which was immediately surrounded with soldiers, who passed the night there, and threatened to fire the neighbouring cots. As they were going away next morning, one of them espied the brown skirt of the Duke's coat, and siezed him. The soldier no sooner knew him, than he burst into tears, and reproached himself for the unhappy discovery.

"The family of the woman who first gave the information, are said to have fallen into decay, and never thriven afterwards.

"The Duke was carried before Anthony Ettrick, of Holt, a Justice of Peace, who ordered him to London. Being asked what he would do if set at liberty? he answered, if his horse and arms were restored, he only desired to ride through the army, and he defied them all to take him again. Farmer Kerley's grandmother, lately dead, saw him, and described him as a dark, genteel, tall man, with a dejected countenance.

"The close where he concealed himself, is called Monmouth Close, and is the extremest N. E. field of the island. The tree stands in a hedge, on a steep bank, and is covered with initials of the names of persons who have been to see it."—*From a Weekly Periodical.*

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SECOND CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE STORY OF ATHELNEY.

SECOND CANTO.

ATTACK AND DISPERSION OF THE SAXONS BY THE DANES AT CHIPPENHAM—KING ALFRED SEEKS A RETREAT IN THE FOREST OF ATHELNEY—FINDS AN ASYLUM IN A NEATHERD'S COTTAGE—RECEIVES TIDINGS OF A DEFEAT OF THE DANES IN DEVONSHIRE—INSPIRED WITH FRESH HOPE, THE KING VISITS THE DANISH CAMP IN THE GUISE OF A HARPER—RETURNS TO HIS RETREAT, REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS FAITHFUL EARLS IN THE ADJOINING COUNTIES, AND SUMMONS THEM TO MEET HIM, WITH THEIR FOLLOWERS, IN THE FOREST OF SELWOOD—ALFRED ADVANCES WITH HIS ARMY, AND OBTAINS A SIGNAL VICTORY OVER THE DANES AT ETHANDUNE, WHICH RESTORES HIM TO HIS THRONE, AND CONFIRMS HIM SOLE MONARCH OF ALL ENGLAND—RETURNS TO ATHELNEY, WHERE SOME OF HIS CAPTIVES BECOME CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY.

I.

From bleak Northumbria's stormy strand,
Far as the Irish Sea;—
Along the low East-Anglian land,
From Humber to the Dee;—
O'er Mercia's fields, her monarch fled,
His wing the Danish Raven spread;

Digitized by Google

All, save fair Wessex—soil and coast—
Were ravaged by that ruthless host;[1]
But there the Saxon standard still
Was seen to wave on hold and hill.

II.

'Twas in the depth of winter, when
King Alfred, with his noble-men,
Relying on his foeman's word,
The bracelet-oath, the sheathéd sword;
In peace securely trusting, came
To keep his Court at Chippenhame;—
But Guthrun—that perfidious Dane,
And fickle as the weather-vane—
Impatient of agrarian toil,
Athirst, like eagle, for the spoil,
Gather'd his locust-hordes around,
And pointed to the Saxon ground,
Where, unprepar'd, their victim lay—
Then, with his war-whoop, led the way.

III.

The gloomy day had just begun
Its slowly-lengthening course to run,

Digitized by Google

And Wessex' King and Christian men,
With due solemnity,
Were gather'd altogether then—
Unmindful of the heathen's hate—
With pious hearts, to celebrate
The Feast of the Epiphany—
When, with a sudden shout, they came,
Like thunder-peal and lightning-flame,
And through the startled City pour'd,
With arrowy storm and flashing sword;—
While fiery Dane and Saxon meet,
Attack, defend, from street to street;
Until the foemen, like a flood,
O'erpower the Christian host;
And Chippenham, deep-stain'd with blood,
Is, briefly, won and lost.
Then, bursting o'er the southern land,
Th' invaders sweep with spear and brand;
Till long pursued, and widely spread,
Their leaders taken, slain, or fled;
The harass'd Saxons hopeless roam,
Or seek afar some foreign home.

Digitized by Google

IV.

But where is he, their King and Chief?
Whose loss would crown a nation's grief—
Last seen amid the battle throng,
And in the fierce tide borne along,
He, with a faithful few around,
At length a moment's safety found
Beneath a wood's embowering oak;—
When thus the anxious Monarch spoke—
"Here, for a breathing space, we halt;—
The Danish blood-hounds, now at fault,
Have overrun their chase—but brief
Must be the last words of your Chief.
Reckless of treaty, ties that bind
All but the basest of mankind,
The Dane hath rush'd on hut and hall,
While keeping holy festival:—
Surpris'd, unharness'd, unprepared,—
Or wily Guthrun had not dared
To beard us in our den;—
But since it is the will of heaven
That from our last hold we are driven,

Digitized by Google

Still let us act like men;
Nor, frighten'd by the foeman's snare
Yield to the darkness of despair—
And as your King hath not the power
To shield you in this evil hour,
While your devotion cannot bring
A present aid to serve your King,
Disperse we now—and every one
Seek safety for himself alone.
And while the blood-stain'd Raven sweeps
O'er our lov'd homes, and Freedom weeps;
Let hope, my friends, your hearts sustain,—
A day will come—we meet again!"

V.

Clad in a common soldier's guise,[2]
To hide his rank from searching eyes;
Bereft of home, of friends, of fame,
A fugitive, without a name,—
King Alfred left his little band,
Like outlaw, in his own fair land!
And when grey eve, at length, had thrown
Her misty robe o'er vale and down;

Digitized by Google

The monarch from his covert came,
With somewhat like a sense of shame,
That he, who never from a foe
Had turn'd his face, or shunned a blow,
Should thus alone, in secret, flee—
But 'twas the will of Destiny!

Then onward, as he bent his way,
Avon's green vale before him lay;
And by the moon's pale gleam,
That now and then her radiance gave,
To shew where flowed its winding wave,
He wandered down the stream;—
And, midst his troubles, haply found
Some solace from its soothing sound.
Where Frome's and Avon's waters meet,
Now lay the fugitive's retreat;
While up the former vale's ascent
And winding river's course he went,
Until the morning rose;
When, entering Selwood's forest-glades,
He found, among its secret shades,

Digitized by Google

A respite from his foes.
How little deem'd the monarch then,
No distant day, his scattered men
Would gather round him there;
When Victory, with rapid wing,
Returning power, with hope, would bring,
And glory from despair!
But now, the lowliest peasant's lot,
The simplest fare, the rudest cot,
Amid that wild and wintry scene,
Seem'd more of worth than Courts had been;
When forced to seek that aid, to live,
Which chance or charity might give.

VI.

When Mindep glow'd with eve's last ray,
And rearward now the forest lay;
The royal Wanderer past the Brue,
With Avalonia's hills in view;
Where Glaston's splendid Abbey stood
Mid fertile fields and sheltering wood:—
Why sought he not asylum there?
The ruthless Northmen scarce would dare

Digitized by Google

To force that holy place!—
What fate such Christian shrines befel,
Let Croyland,* Ely, Ramsay, tell;
And other scenes, where trace
Of murderous sword and fiery brand
Left proofs of their destroying hand!
No, rather, in defeat, would he
Seek for himself obscurity,
Till more auspicious day arrive,
With the stern foe again to strive,
Than ruin and destruction bring
Upon his people, for their King.

Then crossing Cary's infant stream,
That sparkled in the morning-beam,
From Somerton's bold hills, that stand
With broad moors spread on either hand,
He gazed—until his thoughtful eye
A bosky spot could now descry,

* For a description of the horrible cruelties perpetrated by the ferocious Northmen, in the destruction of this venerable Abbey, with others, see Turner's Anglo-Saxon Hist. vol. i. page 232.

Digitized by Google

Just rising from the level ground,
With wintry waters lying round;
As for defence might fitting be,
For sally, or for secresy.

Thus thought the musing monarch then—
And passing on through wood and fen,
He came unto that lonely Isle—
  Whose fixed locality and name
  Were destined to all future fame—
Just as the sun's departing smile
Shed o'er the scene that welcome ray,
As closes oft a winter's day.

VII.

Between the Parret and the Tone,
Remote from towns, secure and lone,
Embower'd o'er with alder-wood,
And bordered by the spreading flood—
At least, 'twas so in elder-day—
Rose the green isle of Athelney.[3]
The deer were seen amidst the brake,
The fish to leap upon the lake;

Digitized by Google

Among the sedge the heron stirr'd,
The wild duck o'er the waters whirr'd;
And wandering beeves sweet pasture found
Upon that rich alluvial ground :—
While one—apart from other men—
Who dwelt upon that Island then,
Was—happier lot might well not be—
A neatherd, with his family;
And food, and shelter for his head,
King Alfred found beneath his shed;[4]
Repaying for his homely fare,
By sharing in the herdsman's care.
Then brought he from the twisted yew,
That sparsely mid the boskage grew,
Tough branch to form a bow;
For, 'mong the Saxons, there were few
The twanging string e'er better drew
On stag, or on the foe.
While o'er the swampy soil around,
Enough of spiry reeds were found
An army to supply
With arrows of a cloth-yard's length;—

Digitized by Google

'Twould take no common arm of strength,
I ween, to make them fly—
And thence the princely archer bore
For war, or chase, an ample store;
While oft, to help their humble board,—
With simplest fare but sparely stored—
He slew the red-deer as it fled—
And venison soon the table spread.

VIII.

Yet there were times when on his brow
A deepening gloom of thought would grow,
As o'er the picture of the past
A retrospective glance he cast;
That shewed him, in his youthful hour,—
When vanity, and pride of power
Held o'er his mind tyrannic sway—
How, from the injured and oppressed,
For aid implored, wrongs unredressed,
His face, in scorn, he turn'd away.
And then his memory would scan
The saying of that holy man—
To whom was given to descry

Digitized by Google

The future with prophetic eye—
"A day would come, an hour would be,
When from the Pagan he should flee;
Deserted, in his utmost need,
For haughty port and hasty deed;
And doom'd awhile to deep distress
Amid the lonely wilderness;
Until repentance sought and given,
Might bring returning hope from heaven!"

Oft would the monarch meditate
Upon that prophecy of fate;—
Or, rather, with more reverence,
The wise decree of Providence;
Till, worn with suffering and with woe,
Remorseful tears began to flow;
When, temper curbed, and heart refined,
With inward peace, brought strength of mind—
The Prince was taught to feel and see
The uses of adversity.
Then doth tradition love to tell
A dream of hope that now befell:[6]—

Digitized by Google

'Twas in a vision of the night,
A form appear'd—supremely bright!—
And said—"O King! what would'st thou give
From these afflictions free to live?"
The spirit of the monarch saw
That heavenly visitant with awe;
And made reply—"O Saint! thus low,
Surrounded by successful foe;
My kingdom lost, bereft of all,
Without a true friend in my fall,
What gifts could I bestow?"
To whom the vision—"I am he,
Neot! thy friend—rejoiced to be
The herald of a message, given
By Him who rules in earth and heaven!
He, in his power, doth promise thee,
That, after Easter, thou shalt see
Thy scattered army meet again;—
Exceedingly shall they rejoice
Once more to hear thy welcome voice
Lead onward to the battle-plain!
And then before them I will go,

Digitized by Google

Whilst thou shalt triumph o'er the foe;
And he who seeks to conquer thee,
A convert to our faith shall be!"

IX.

Then kindled up a brighter flame
In Alfred's breast—and courage came;
And with it stirring thoughts, that lead
To high emprise and lofty deed!—
His rank revealing to the few
That dwelt around—the firm and true,
Still loyal to his rights and name—
Unto that lonely Isle they came;
And then his followers faster grew,
Remembering but his former fame.

Now sallying from his secret hold,
Begirt with train both keen and bold,[6]
He found detachments of the foe
Out-spread o'er all the country round,
As locusts, ravaging the ground—
And frequent dealt a sudden blow,
So rapid, they could seldom tell

Digitized by Google

From whence, like thunder-bolt, it fell!
Or, when repress'd by force awhile,
Retreating to his sheltering Isle,
The Dane soon felt, by night or day,
Again the forage and the fray.

X.

Now, unexpected, from the West
Auspicious tidings came;[7]—
Fierce Hubba, an unwelcome guest,—
Whose hordes our coast would oft infest
With murderous sword and flame—
Had landed on the open shore,
Close by the walls of Appledore;
When Odun, Devon's Earldorman,
To shun the foremost shock,
With followers few, to Kynwith ran;
His castle on the rock:—
Then Hubba, waiting for his prey,
With thirst of spoil, before him lay:—
But, for a space, the Saxon stood
Firm as the oak within his wood,
And kept the Dane at bay;

Digitized by Google

Till want of water and of food
Would brook no more delay.

Then silent, ere the morning rose,
Earl Odun stole upon his foes,
Like tiger from his den;—
And rushing on the pirate crew
Amid their tents, half-sleeping, slew
Full twice six hundred men!
While Hubba, tyrant of the main—
The "Reafan"* doom'd no more to see,
Embroider'd by his sisters three—
Was numbered with the slain.

XI.

Elated by the glorious strife
Which ended with the sea-king's life,
And with the magic standard ta'en
By Devon's Earl, his gallant Thane,
King Alfred saw good omen given
Of fast-returning aid from heaven.

* The Raven, or Danish standard.

Digitized by Google

And then that thought all-daring came—
For ever blended with his fame—
The Danish camp to penetrate
Alone, in glee-man's* guise;[8]
Himself fierce Guthrun's force would see,
Exposure or security,
And where most open to surprise:—
When, if a gleam of hope he saw
Against the foe his sword to draw;
The Saxon cry once more should be,
"Or give us death, or victory!"

His venturous course maturely laid,
The King, in fitting garb arrayed,
His refuge left awhile;
What time spring-showers begin to fall,
And April suns to smile:—
Then, with a boy at beck or call,
Departing with the dawn of day,
O'er vale and down he bent his way.

* A wandering harper or minstrel, from Gleek—music, musician.

Digitized by Google

A quiver o'er his shoulder slung,
Across his breast the bugle hung;
Tough bow within his band:
A stately stag-hound by his side,
Of noble blood and courage tried;
A boar-spear in his hand.
While, following his minstrel-lord,
Who oft exchang'd a passing word,
His harp the stripling bore:—
A gallant group was that, I trow,
Though such be never witness'd now,
'Twere often seen of yore;
When glee-men o'er the realm would pace,
Equipped for war, the song, or chase.

And oft in pauses made for rest,
'Neath peasant-cot or greenwood-tree;
In bardic guise the princely guest,
Would strike his chords of harmony:—
And as some bit of ballad-strain,
Or broken glee he sung;
The circling sounds would come again,

Digitized by Google

As through the woods they rung:—
For he had learnt, in youthful hour,
To touch the harp with sweetest power;
And loved his memory to store,—
While listening in his father's hall,—
With song heroic, legend lore,
At feast or solemn festival;
When minstrels met, of high degree,
To grace the scene with melody.
Yet frequent o'er his brow would steal
The anxious thought that dwelt within;
Such as a patriot-prince might feel,
Ere the great game he doth begin,
This English realm to lose or win!

Broad moorland and deep forest past,
Wiltshire's wide downs were reach'd at last;
Where solitary Silence reigned—until
A camp was seen upon the hill;—
And as its standard nearer grew,
The Raven seem'd as though it flew:—
While mid the still of evening gray,

Digitized by Google

That followed with declining day,
Rude sounds came frequent on the air,
That shewed the sleep of watchful care—
For mirth and revelry were there.

XII.

Amid his peers King Guthrun sate
With haughty brow and eye elate:—
The feast was o'er, but still around
The wine-cup quickly went;—
When message from the outer ground
Arrived within his tent:—
"A wandering minstrel, on his way,
Would entertain the Court a day;
If such its pleasure be:"—
When, low at first, a murmur ran,
The wish to see the skilful man,
And hear his melody.
But when their chief, who ruled the feast,
Gave welcome to the tuneful guest;
Uprose the social din;
As, with a waving of the hand,

Digitized by Google

He issued forth his brief command—
"Go, bid the glee-man in!"

Soon, entering slow in deep disguise,
King Alfred stood before their eyes;
His boy, with harp, behind:—
'Twere hard to tell his feelings then,
When brought before those Northern men,
The thoughts that filled his mind;
But caution cool, and courage high,
Were mingled in his steadfast eye.
Then glancing courteously around,
He filled his harp with gentle sound;
As though his well-tun'd ear would try
If all its chords gave harmony.
Yet ere his song the bard began,
The notes in rapid prelude ran,
Their fixed attention thus to gain—
Then rose his voice, and flowed the strain.

He sung of Scandinavia's clime—
Broad lake and piny wood;

Digitized by Google

Of rocks and cataracts sublime,
Of mountain and of flood;
Vast plains that lone and silent be,
And thousand isles that gem the sea.
Then brought he to their ear and eye
Wild winter's scenes of snow,
The eagle's scream, the wolf's sharp cry,
The reindeer-sledge swift gliding by,
Bells tinkling as they go;
The fisher's toil, the hunter's chase,
With all that charms a northern race.

Now softer o'er the trembling strings
His fingers gently move;
Of childhood's happy hours he sings,
The hopes that life domestic brings,
The joys and cares of love!
With all the ties, where'er we roam,
That bind us to our native home.
Then, mid the pauses of his strain,
That seem'd strange influence to gain,
Long sighs from heaving breasts were heard;

Digitized by Google

With accents murmuring low;—
While, from the depths of feeling stirred,
Full tears began to flow:—
And stern hearts steel'd 'gainst right or wrong,
Were softened by the power of song!

But when to notes of loftier tone,
The minstrel chang'd his lay;
And sung the deeds of high renown,
The battle and the fray;
Their deep sighs to the winds were thrown,
Their tear-drops dashed away:—
And as his theme expanding grew,
Intense the joy became;
When opened to their mortal view,
Valhalla's feast of fame!
The spirits of their mighty dead,
That e'er in battle fell or bled,
Seem'd round the festal board to tread;
And as their voices rose,
The wine flowed free to Odin's name
In skull-cups of their foes!

Digitized by Google

Uprising from his lofty seat,
  Erect the Chieftain stood;
While with the strain his heart-pulse beat,
  And faster flowed his blood;
Recalling deeds of spoil and strife,
That mark the course of warrior's life.
"Ho! fill the wine-bowl to the brim,—
And pledge the purple draught to him—
Health to the bard! to whom belong,
All honours due to noble song!"
The cup went round, and plaudits rung,
While praises flowed from every tongue;
When Guthrun from his finger drew
  A gold-enshrinéd gem
Of purest ray and richest hue,
  That well might grace a diadem;
And, with fair word and action bland,
Transferr'd it to the minstrel's hand.
"Thanks to the Chief!" the glee-man said—
Then, bending gracefully his head,—
As fast the dawn of morning grew—
King Alfred from the tent withdrew.

Digitized by Google

XIII.

Once more within his lone retreat,
And favour'd by the bold deceit
That gave him all he sought to know,—
The strength or weakness of the foe;—
Swift messengers the Monarch sent—
Resolved to strike a final blow—
With knowledge of his fixed intent
To Earldorman and Thane;
And issuing his high command,
That each should come with arméd band,
To meet at "Eglricht's-Stane."

The summons heard, without delay
His gallant noblemen obey,[9]
From all the country round;—
And on th' appointed day,
The valiant Saxon men are found
By ancient Selwood's eastern bound,
All ready for the fray.
But when their liege appear'd in sight,
Up went a shout of wild delight,

Digitized by Google

That made the welkin ring;—
Then swords were drawn, and spurs were set,
And as the men their Monarch met,
They cried "The King!—the King!"
Then Alfred spoke—and instant round
The air grew silent at the sound:—
"Welcome, my friends! thrice welcome be
The present hour, that bids me see
My gallant Thanes and faithful men
Around me gathered once agen;
Prepared upon the ruthless foe
To strike amain the final blow;
And though our warriors are but few,
They'll prove enough, if firm and true.

Though He who rules in earth and heaven—
By whom success alone is given—
Thought fit awhile our hearts to try
By sore defeat, with ruin nigh;
Yet victory hath He restored
In Devon by Earl Odun's sword;
Their famous Raven-standard ta'en,

Digitized by Google

And Hubba, with his pirates, slain.
Then forward!—and to-morrow ye
Confronted with the foe shall be;
But since, to take him by surprise,
Our rout along the forest lies;
In silence march, and screened from sight;—
We halt at Eglea for the night."

XIV.

With morn the Saxon men arose,
Refreshed, from sound yet brief repose;
And, leaving Eglea, stood at noon
Before the Danes, at Ethandune!
So silently and fast they came,
The foe, engaged in sportive game,—
Unwitting of the warrior train
That now approach'd so near—
Were scattered o'er the neighbouring plain,
Their strong encampment in the rear—
When, ere the English front was seen,
The King advanced, with gallant mien,
And thus addressed his men—
"Saxons! the hour, at length, is come,

Digitized by Google

When, for our country, fanes, and home,
With freedom from a foreign tie;
'Tis ours to conquer—or to die!
Behold! the Pagan host to-day,
In honour of their idols, stray
  At distance from their den;—
By Him alone, who rules above,
And saves us by His mighty love,
  But few *that* hold shall reach again!
And now 'The Holy Cross' shall be
Our cry, for death or victory!'
When vows of vengeance, muttered low,
Throughout the ranks, electric ran;
And, shouting, down the Saxons go,
Like avalanche, upon the foe;
  King Alfred in their van![10]

Fixed to the spot by sudden fear,
  The Danes, all-silent, stood;—
Then seizing each his bow and spear,
In stern array they soon appear,
  To stem the coming flood.

Digitized by Google

But when fierce Guthrun, from his hold,
Beheld the English train
Rush down, like wolves upon the fold,
Dispersed o'er all the plain—
Straight from his fort, in haste, he sped,
And, with his chieftains onward led
The battle-field to gain.

Fast then the Saxon arrows flew,—
And nearer as the conflict grew
Light lance and spear were thrown;
Till hotly mingling, man with man,
The strife with sword and axe began;
When many a stern death-blow was given,
And helmet cleft, and buckler riven,
While hosts were trampled down:—
'Twas like the waving of a wood,
When winds are raging high;
The rushing of a tempest cloud
Across the dreary sky;
'Twas like the waves, when rolling free,
Upon a wild and stormy sea!

Digitized by Google

But when, amid that doubtful strife,
The balance hung 'tween death and life;
Amid the shock and din of blows,
The cry, "King Alfred," now arose—
A shout that quail'd the brave,
The boldest of his furious foes—
They deem'd him risen from the grave!
When, like a whirlwind, rushing by,
He spurred on with his chivalry!
Then, straight towards the conflict's storm,
Was seen a strange and awful form,
That on before them strode—
"St. Neot!" then became the cry,
"St. Neot!" sounded through the sky—
"Now, by the Holy Cross, they fly!"—
While Death upon his pale horse rode!

Then, panic-struck, King Guthrun fled—
The Raven, on his banner spread,
With flagging wing and drooping head,
Now sunk upon the plain;
And found at Ethandune his bed,

Digitized by Google

Among the dying and the dead,
No more to rise again:—
While, long before the set of sun,
Was freedom gain'd, and England won!

XV.

At Athelney, a victor now,
Is Alfred seen again;[11]—
And though no laurel bind his brow,
King Guthrun swells his train;
With thirty of his chiefest men
That fell not on the plain.
In council wise, as bold in deed,
And merciful as brave;
The Saxon Monarch's proudest meed
Was from the Pagan rites to lead
His captives to a purer creed,
And evermore to save:—
No vulgar conqueror was he,
But great in his humility.

When oath and hostage failed to bind,
As sacred law, the savage mind,

Digitized by Google

And stern experience led to see,
The depths of Danish perfidy—
The Christian King, with motive high,
  Resolv'd to act a different part;
And penetrate the springs that lie
  The deepest in the human heart;
By using all the power that's given,
With hope of farther aid from heaven.
Then, summoning his captives round,
  He taught them from the sacred Word;
Until their feelings were unbound,
  The fountains of the soul were stirr'd;
Repentant tears bedew'd the ground,
And peace, with heavenly freedom, found.

A lone Church stood on Aulre's mount,
  And there the King and captives came;[12]—
Then round the rude baptismal fount,
  Each man received a Christian name:
While England's Monarch, 'neath the Rood,
For Guthrun royal sponsor stood;
And call'd him, as the noblest Dane,

Digitized by Google

In Anglo-Saxon—Athelstane.
Then, from the primal sacrament,
To Wedmore's princely seat they went;—
Their brows the chrysmal fillet bound,
  Their robes were purest white;
The solemn feast was spread around,
While sacred music's sweetest sound
  Inspired them with delight.

Twelve days in entertainment past,
The hour of parting came at last;
But when approaching, face to face,
To give a mutual embrace,
The bold Dane saw, upon the King,
The sparkling of his own bright ring;
He knew the minstrel-guest that came
  To entertain him by a tune
  Within his tent at Ethendune,
And Wessex' Monarch, were the same—
Nor wonder'd one, so bold and brave,
Should conquer on the land and wave.

Digitized by Google

Then words of constant friendship flowed,
While Alfred costly gifts bestowed,
With vows each other to befriend,
And still the Cross of Christ defend;—
That predatory raids should cease,
Allies in war, and friends in peace.
Then Guthrun, with his warrior band,
Departed for East-Anglia's land;
The rival Chieftains sheath'd the sword,
And Wessex's King was England's Lord.

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO SECOND CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 244.

All, save fair Wessex—soil and coast—
Were ravaged by that ruthless host;

"The death of Ethelred, in 871, raised Alfred to the throne of Wessex. * * * * It was a crown taken up from the field of defeat (by the Danes), dropping with a brother's blood; and accordingly, when Alfred accepted it, he began a new life of anxiety, shaded for some time with the deepest gloom of misfortune.

"The fiercest and most destructive succession of conflicts which ever saddened a year of human existence, distinguished that of Alfred's accession with peculiar misery. With their own population the West Saxons maintained eight pitched battles against the Northmen, besides innumerable skirmishes by day and night, with which the nobles and royal officers endeavoured to check their depredations. Many thousands of the invaders fell, but new fleets of adventurers were perpetually shading the German ocean with their armaments, who supplied the havoc caused by the West Saxon swords."

From this period, a series of partial triumphs and defeats with his enemies, succeeded until the year 878, when the whole of England, north of the Thames, was in possession of the Danes. At this time the historian of the Anglo-Saxons observes:—"The locusts of the Baltic, to use the expressive metaphor of the

Digitized by Google

chronicles, having spread themselves over part of Mercia in the preceding August, and being joined by new swarms, advanced again into Wessex; and in January took possession of Chippenham, in Wiltshire, where they passed the winter, and from which they made excursive ravages over the adjacent country. On this decisive invasion, many of the inhabitants emigrated in penury and terror to other regions. Some fled over sea, and to France; the rest, overawed by the cavalry of the invaders, submitted to their dominion, and Alfred was compelled to become a fugitive.

"These circumstances, which every chronicle states or implies, are so extraordinary that it is difficult to comprehend them. The Danes invade Wessex, the country falls undefended into their hands, and Alfred preserves his life by such a concealment, that his friends were as ignorant as his enemies, both of his residence and fate. Such became his distress, that he knew not where to turn; such was his poverty, that he had no subsistence but that which by furtive or open plunder he could extort, or by fishing and hunting obtain. He wandered about in woods and marshes in the greatest penury, sometimes with a few companions; sometimes, for greater secrecy, alone. He had neither territory, nor, for a time, the hope of regaining any.

"To find Alfred and the country in this distress, and at the same time to remark, that no battles are mentioned to have occurred between the arrival of the Northmen at Chippenham, and the flight of the King, or the subjection of the country, are circumstances peculiarly perplexing. * * * *

"To understand this obscure incident it is necessary to notice some charges of misconduct which have been made against Alfred. The improprieties alluded to, are declared to have had political consequences, and to have been connected with his mysterious seclusion.

"An ancient life of Saint Neot, a kinsman of Alfred, exists in Saxon, which alludes, though vaguely, to some impropriety in the King's conduct. It says that Neot chided him with

Digitized by Google

many words, and spoke to him prophetically :—'O King, much shalt thou suffer in this life; hereafter so much distress thou shalt abide, that no man's tongue may say it all. Now, loved child, hear me if thou wilt, and turn thy heart to my counsel. Depart entirely from thine unrighteousness, and thy sins with alms redeem, and with tears abolish.'

"Another life of Saint Neot is somewhat stronger in its expressions of reproach. It states, that Neot, reproving his bad actions, commanded him to amend; that Alfred, not having wholly followed the rule of reigning justly, pursued the way of depravity; that one day when the King came, Neot sharply reproached him for the wickedness of his tyranny, and the proud austerity of his government. That Neot foretold his misfortunes :—'Why do you glory in your misconduct? though you are exalted in iniquity, you shall not continue; you shall be bruised like the ears of wheat; where then will be your pride?'

"Matthew of Westminster also inculpates forcibly some faults of Alfred: he affirms, that Neot, amid other familiar conversation, reproached him for his bad actions, warned him of their future punishment, and foretold his misfortunes. 'You shall be harassed by the Pagans in this kingdom, in which you swell and exercise a tyranny so immoderate; you shall be a fugitive for some time, because your sins exact it. But if you repent of your cruel actions and inordinate passions, you shall find mercy.'

"Another writer of a chronicle asserts, that Alfred, in the beginning of his reign, indulged in luxury and vice, and that the amendment of his conduct was a consequence of his adversity.

"These statements," continues the historian, "considered by themselves, have neither that authenticity nor distinctness which ought to prevail against Alfred's acknowledged virtues. To know how far they are connected with truth, we must investigate the admissions of Asser. His evidence on such a subject is of the highest impression. He was Alfred's confi-

Digitized by Google

dential friend; he loved his royal master, and would certainly never have overstated his faults.

"Asser avows his belief, that the King's adversity was not *unmerited*. The reason which he adduces for his opinion is, that 'in the first part of his reign, while yet a young man, and governed by a youthful mind, when the men of his kingdom and his subjects came to him, and besought him in their necessities; when they who were oppressed by power, implored his aid and patronage, he would not hear them; he conceded no assistance, he treated them as of no estimation.' Asser continues to state that 'Saint Neot, who was then living, his (the King's) relation, deeply lamented this, and foretold that the greatest adversity would befal him. But Alfred paid no attention to his admonitions, and treated the prediction with disdain.

"The guarded expressions of the bishop, writing *to* (query *of?*) his living sovereign, whom he highly venerated, prevent us from decyphering more clearly the exact nature of Alfred's offence. As far as he goes, however, he gives some confirmation to the traditions we have also quoted. He confesses some misconduct in the discharge of the King's royal functions. And, as he adds, that Alfred's punishment was so severe in this world, that his insapientia, his folly, might not be chastised hereafter, we may presume that the fault was of magnitude, though he has not very clearly explained it.

"The prophetic spirit of Neot could be nothing but his sagacity. The King's neglect of the complaints and sufferings of his subjects may have made him unpopular, and Neot may have foreseen the calamities which would result from the displeasure of the people. The activity and power of the Danes could not be resisted with success, without the highest zeal and alacrity of the Saxon people. But if Alfred, by treating their grievances with contempt, had alienated their affections, the strongest fortress of his throne was sapped.

"In considering this subject," continues the same writer,

Digitized by Google

"we must, in justice to Alfred, remember that all his errors were confined to the first part of his reign, and were nobly amended. It is also fair to state that the imputed neglect of his people must not be hastily attributed to a tyrannical disposition, because it may be referred to circumstances which better suit his authentic character. It may have arisen from the intellectual disparity between himself and his people. When men begin to acquire knowledge they sometimes encourage a haughty self-opinion, a craving fondness for their favourite pursuits, and an irritable impatience of every interruption. This hurtful temper, which disappears as the judgment matures, may have accompanied Alfred's first acquisitions of knowledge, and such feelings could only be exasperated when the duties of his office called him from his studies and meditations into a world of barbarians, who despised books and bookmen, with whom his mind could have no point of contact, whose ignorance provoked his contempt, and whose habits, perhaps, excited his abhorrence.

"Asser connects with the hints about his faults an intimation, that in this important crisis of his life, he suffered from the disaffection of his subjects. It is expressed obscurely, but the words are of strong import. He says, 'The Lord permitted him to be very often wearied by his enemies, afflicted by adversity, and to be depressed by *the contempt of his people.*' He adds to these phrases the paragraphs already quoted about his faults, and ends the subject by declaring, '*Wherefore* he fell after into such misery, that none of his subjects knew where he was, or what had befallen him.'

"Asser had already declared, that on the invasion of Godwin many fled into exile; and that, 'for the greatest part, all the inhabitants of that region submitted to his dominion.' The inference which seems naturally to result from all his passages is, that Alfred had offended his people, and in this trying emergency was deserted by them. Other authors also declare that it was their flight which produced his."—*Hist. Anglo-Saxons, by Sharon Turner*, vol. i., p. 248.

Digitized by Google

NOTE II. Page 247.

Clad in a common soldier's guise,
To hide his rank from searching eyes;

"He left his seat of royalty (Chippenham) in the disguise of a common soldier, and quitting his companions, for the sake of secrecy, he fled into the woods. He continued to travel, hiding himself in the wilds and hedges through which he passed. He knew not whither to go, nor whom to trust. He went on as accident led, or as exigency impelled him; and at last reaching Somersetshire, he found a place insulated by marshes and water, which promised an asylum."—*Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, p. 256.

History has left no intimation of the royal fugitive's wanderings across the country, after his discomfiture at Chippenham by the Danes; the author, therefore, has assumed, in his description, that he would have taken nearly the course he has there followed to reach Athelney.

NOTE III. Page 251.

Rose the green isle of Athelney.

"Between the hamlet of Boroughbridge and the church of Ling, is the famous Isle of Athelney, being a spot of rising ground on the north side of Stanmoor, bounded on the north-west* by the river Thone, over which is a wooden bridge, still called Athelney bridge. The name given by the Saxons to this island was Ædelinza Izza, or the Isle of Nobles, by contraction Athelney.

"This spot, which was anciently environed with almost impassable marshes and morasses, will be ever memorable for the

* This is an error; it should be south-east.

Digitized by Google

retreat of King Alfred from the fury of the Danes, who in tumultuous numbers had overrun the eastern parts of his dominions. The register of Athelney sets forth, that Alfred, after having bravely encountered his enemies for nine successive years, was at length reduced to the necessity of fleeing from them, and taking refuge in the little Isle of Athelney. The place that lodged him was a small cottage belonging to St. Athelwine, formerly a hermit here, the son of King Kynegilsus. After his emersion from this retirement, and the total defeat of his enemies, he founded a monastery for Benedictine monks on the spot which had given him shelter, and dedicated the same to the honor of St. Saviour and St. Peter the apostle, appointing John the first Abbot, and endowing the establishment with the whole Isle of Athelney, exempt from taxes and all other burdens, with common pasture and free ingress and egress in Stathmoor, Saltmoor, Haymoor, and Currymoor, and all other moors within his manor of North Curry. He likewise gave ten cassates or hides of land in Long Sutton, with all meadows, pastures, rivers, and all other appurtenances whatsoever—which benefactions were afterwards confirmed to the monks, and many others added thereto by different kings and nobles."—*Regist. Abb. Atheln.*

"William of Malmsbury gives us a romantic account of this island and monastery. 'Atholney,' says he, 'is not an island of the sea; but is so inaccessible on account of the bogs and the inundations of the lakes, that it cannot be got to but in a boat. It has a very large wood of alders, which harbours stags, wild goats, and other beasts. The firm land, which is only two acres in breadth, contains a little monastery, and dwellings for monks. Its founder was King Alfred, who, being driven over the country by the Danes, spent some time here in secure privacy. Here in a dream St. Cuthbert appearing to him, and giving him assurance of his restoration, he vowed that he would build a monastery to God. Accordingly he erected a church, moderate indeed as to size, but as to

Digitized by Google

method of construction singular and novel, for four pins, driven into the ground, support the whole fabrick, four circular chancels being drawn round it. The monks are few in number and indigent; but they are sufficiently compensated for their poverty by the tranquillity of their lives, and their delight in solitude.'—*Will. Malmsb. ap Dugd. Mon. Angl.*

"Some allusion to the vision of St. Cuthbert above-mentioned is supposed to have been intended by a little curious amulet of enamel and gold, richly ornamented, that was found in 1693 in Newton Park, at some distance northward from the Abbey. On one side of it is a rude figure of a person sitting crowned, and holding in each hand a sceptre, surmounted by a lily, which Dr. Hickes and other antiquaries have imagined to be designed for St. Cuthbert. The other side is filled by a large flower, and round the edge is the following legend:—*AELFRED MEC HEIT GEVURCAN;* that is, *Alfred ordered me to be made.* This piece of antiquity is now in the Museum at Oxford."*—*Collin.*

"The abbey buildings are supposed, from various parts of them that have been discovered at different times, to have been very magnificent. * * * In 1674, some labourers discovered the foundation of the ancient church, which stood on the top of the hill to the north-east, and there found bases of pillars, elegant tracery work of windows, and divers pieces of sculptured free-stone, still retaining the marks of paint and gold. They were said to have likewise found at the same time a large spur of gold, which they privately disposed of for their own benefit.

"The conventual church was partly rebuilt in 1321, and an indulgence of twenty days granted to the contributors thereto. Not a vestige now remains of this once famous pile, the field on which it stood being converted into tillage. The whole island contains about one hundred acres, and forms a

* Bodleian Library.

Digitized by Google

compact farm of about equal portions of arable and pasture."—*Collin.*

On the supposed site of the ancient monastery stands a memorial with the following inscription:—

King Alfred the Great,
In the Year of our Lord 879,
Having been defeated by
The Danes, fled for refuge
To the forest of Athelney,
Where he lay concealed
From his enemies for the
Space of a whole year;—
He soon after regained
Possession of his throne,
And in grateful remembrance
Of the protection he had
Received under the favour
Of heaven, erected a
Monastery on this spot, and
Endowed it with all the
Lands contained in the
Isle of Athelney.
To
Perpetuate the memory
Of so remarkable an
Incident in the life of
That illustrious Prince,
This edifice was founded
By John Slade, Esq., of
Mansel, the proprietor of
Athelney Farm,
and Lord of the
Manor of North Petherton.
A. D. 1801.

Digitized by Google

NOTE IV. Page 252.

And food, and shelter for his head,
King Alfred found beneath his shed;

"In his wanderings he beheld the humble cottage of a swineherd, and he entered it a lonely exile. To the natural questions, who he was, and why he was lurking in a place so unfrequented, he answered, that he was one of Alfred's attendants, who had fled from a fatal battle, and wanted concealment from pursuit. His intimation of distress interested the rude feelings of the peasant, and he was sheltered with hospitality for many days in the hovel, poor and unknown, It is even intimated that he diligently served them.

"One Sunday, when the peasant had led his herd to their usual pasture, his wife prepared her fire to make their rustic bread, called *loudas*, against his return. Other domestic business requiring her attention, she committed her cakes to the care of the King, who sat furbishing his bow and arrows, perhaps intending to use them for the acquisition of food. Alfred, on whose mind reflections the most interesting must have been hourly pressing, forgot his allotted task, and suffered the bread to burn. The woman saw their fate, ran enraged to the fire, and poured out her invectives against the apparent soldier. She told him she saw daily that he was a great eater, and commanded him to turn the cakes, to prevent them from being spoiled.

"These homely taunts must have sounded harshly to Alfred's haughty temper, but he was compelled to convert the vulgar effervescence to a moral utility; he heard with patience, and coerced his irritability. He subdued his angry passions so effectually, as to answer, mildly, that he should indeed be slothful, if he could not mind the little office. He applied himself

Digitized by Google

with attention to the new and homely labour, and carefully baked his severe hostess's bread.

"It is stated that he afterwards munificently rewarded the hospitable peasant. He observed him to be a man of capacity; he recommended him to apply to letters, and to assume the ecclesiastical profession. He afterwards made him Bishop of Winchester.

"The solitude of his retreat," observes the historian, "must have concurred with his penury and mortifications to make him pensive and melancholy. It is in its distress that arrogance learns to know its folly; that man feels his insignificance, and discerns the importance of others to his well-being and even existence. Humility, urbanity, philanthropy, decorum, and self-coercion; all the virtues which are requisite to produce the good-will of our species, are among the offspring which nature has allotted to adversity, and which the wise and good have in every age adopted in their eclipse. The sequel of Alfred's reign, which was a stream of virtue and intelligence, attests that his fortunate humiliation disciplined his temper, softened his heart, and enlightened his understanding.' —*Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, vol i. p. 256.

NOTE V. Page 254.

Then doth tradition love to tell
A dream of hope that now befell:—

"If we may credit," a modern author says, "the writer of an Anglo-Saxon Homily of the middle of the eleventh century, his confidence of eventual success was miraculously inspired. St. Neot, it is there affirmed, 'appeared to him in a dream, and shining exceedingly bright,' said to him, 'O King! what wouldest thou give to be free from these afflictions?' Alfred

Digitized by Google

became much terrified at this vision; however, he answered to the saint, 'What have I to give? I am deprived of my kingdom, and of all my possessions.' The saint answered him, 'I am Neot, thy friend; I now am in happiness with the King of heaven. He, in his power, promiseth thee that thou shalt return, after Easter, to thine own country; thy scattered army shall come to meet thee, and shall rejoice exceedingly at thy return. I go before thee; do thou and thy people follow after me. I truly shall scatter all thine enemies; and the King who fightest against thee I will convert to the true faith.'

NOTE VI. Page 256.

Now sallying from his secret hold,
Begirt with train both keen and bold,

"The place of his retreat was peculiarly fitted to be made a military post of the most defensible nature. It was a small spot of firm land, a few acres in extent, environed by water and impassable marshes, which the conflux of the Parret and the Thone had produced. It contained a wood of alders, which abounded with stags and goats. There was no access but by small boats.

"He chanced to meet some of his people, fugitives like himself, to whom he became known. They acquiesced in his plans. A long bridge, very laboriously constructed, was made to afford an easier entrance to one part of his retreat; and upon the western end of the bridge they built a strong fort, which made hostile approaches impracticable.

"Having secured the place of his residence, he increased the number of the companions of his fortunes, and began an excursive warfare against the enemy. It would seem that his wife and family joined him. His friends supported themselves

Digitized by Google

in their retreat by hunting, fishing, and depredation. Few in number, but formidable from their union and vigour, they assailed the invaders whenever opportunity tempted, or surprise promised to discomfit. Their small band was so inferior to the barbaric multitude, that their first attempts were not crowned with great success; but defeat only augmented their prudence, and called new energies into action. Gradually their numbers increased, and their hope of victory sometimes procured it. Retiring into their unknown asylum, with a celerity which baffled pursuit, when repulsed by superior force, they soon harassed the enemy with hostility in a distant quarter. By day and by night, from woods and marshes, they were ever rushing on the Northmen with all the advantages of selection and surprise.

"By these expeditions Alfred provided himself and his party with sustenance; he inured himself to war and skilful generalship; he improved in the knowledge of the country, secured the attachment of his friends, provided new resources of character for his future life, collected perpetual intelligence of the motions of the Danes, revived the spirit of the country, and prepared it for that great exploit which was so soon to crown his labours."

NOTE VII. Page 257.

Now, unexpected, from the West
Auspicious tidings came;—

The King's "measures to regain his throne, and to surround it with its natural and impregnable bulwark, the confidence of his people, were judicious and exemplary. An auspicious incident at this juncture occurred to fortify his courage, and to give reason to his hopes.

"Hubba, who, with his brothers Hingwar and Halfden, had

Digitized by Google

conducted the fatal fleet to England, to avenge the death of their father, and who had distinguished himself in the massacre at Peterborough, had been harassing the Britons in South Wales, where he had wintered. After much of that slaughter, which always attended their invasions, he returned with twenty-three ships to the English channel. Sailing by the north of Devonshire, the Castle of Kynwith* attracted his notice, where many of the King's servants had embraced the protection of Odun, Earl of Devon. The place was unprovided with subsistence. It had no stronger fortification than a Saxon wall; but Hubba found that its rocky situation made it impregnable against all assault, except at the eastern point. He also remarked that no water was near it, and consequently that a short siege would reduce the inhabitants to every misery of thirst and famine. He preferred the certain victory of a blockade to a bloody attack, and surrounded it with his followers.

"Odun saw the extent of his distress, and the inevitable certainty on which the pagans calculated; and determined on a vigorous sally. It was bravely executed. While the dawn was mingling with the darkness, Odun pierced at once to the tent of Hubba, slew him and his attendants, and, turning on the affrighted host, made twelve hundred prisoners, the companions of their expiring commander; a few reached their vessels and escaped. An immense booty rewarded the victors, among which, the capture of their magical standard, the famous "Reafan," was to the eye of ignorant superstition a more fatal disaster than even Hubba's death, and their destructive defeat.†"

Hist. Anglo-Saxons.

* "Risdon places this Castle near Apledore; it is called Henny Castle."
Gough's Camden, p. 40.

† "The Sax. Chron. makes the number of the slain eight hundred and forty. Asser describes the 'Raven' as a banner woven by Hubba's sisters, the daughters of Lodbrog, in one noon-tide. It was believed that the bird appeared as if flying when the Danes were to conquer, but was motionless when they were to be defeated."—*Asser*, 32. *Flo. Wig.* 316

Digitized by Google

NOTE VIII. Page 259.

And then that thought all-daring came—

* * * *

The Danish camp to penetrate
Alone, in glee-man's guise;

"After several months of obscurity,* the King formed a scheme for surprising the great Danish Army, which still continued in Wiltshire; and he resolved to inspect their encampments in person, that he might frame the plan, and appreciate the probability of its success. His early predilection for the arts of poetry and music had qualified him to assume the disguise of a harper; in this garb he went among the Danish tents. His harp and his talents excited notice; he was admitted to the royal tables, heard the secret counsels of his foes, and beheld their exposed position unsuspected. He left the encampment, and reached Etheling Isle in security. It was now Whitsuntide. He dispatched confidential messengers to his principal friends in the three adjacent counties, Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Somersetshire, announcing his existence, requiring them secretly to collect their followers, and to meet him in military array on the east of Selward Forest."†

* "Mr. Walker, in his notes to Sir John Spelman's Life of Alfred, computes that Alfred's seclusion did not last six months. Chippenham was taken in January, and the great battle which produced his restoration was fought seven weeks after Easter. Easter-day was in that year the 23rd of March. The seventh week after that would, of course, be the 11th of May, which does not allow the retreat to have been five months."

† "This was named in British Coit Mawr, the great wood."—*Asser* 33. "The county (perhaps from the wood) was anciently called Scalwardscire." *Ethelw.* p. 837. "The wood reaches from Frome to Bruham, near fifteen miles in length, and six in breadth."—*Gough's Camden.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE IX. Page 267.

The summons heard, without delay
His gallant noblemen obey;

"As the Anglo-Saxons had suffered severely in his absence, the tidings of his re-appearance excited rapture in every breast. All who were intrusted with the secret crowded enthusiastically to the place of meeting. Alfred met them at the stone of Egbert, on the east of the great-wood, and was received with ardent congratulations. They encamped there for that night. At the next dawn he marched them to Ecglea, where at night they again encamped. They rose when the morning tints diffused their gleams of light, and marched rapidly to Eddinton, near Westbury, where the Northern myriads overspread the plains."

NOTE X. Page 270.

And, shouting, down the Saxons go,
Like avalanche, upon the foe;
King Alfred in their van!

"The Anglo-Saxons rushed on their enemies with an impetuosity which disordered valour was unable to withstand. It was Alfred who led them on, who seemed to have risen from his grave to destroy them. Astounded at his name and presence, surprised in all the carelessness of fancied security, the Danes could only oppose with the confused efforts of haste and disorder. But these were unavailing. The plain was strewed

Digitized by Google

with their hosts; part fled to a neighbouring fortification, and Alfred was left the master of that important field, which, from the marshes and poverty of Ethelingey, exalted him to the throne of England.

"The King, with vigorous judgment, followed the Northmen to their fortress; and, contrary to their hopes, encamped himself strongly round it. By this decisive measure, he cut them off from all reinforcement, and confined them to the scanty subsistence which happened to be in their station. While the siege lasted, the strength of Alfred augmented in a proportion which destroyed in the Danes every hope of emancipation. They lingered in unavailing distress for fourteen days, and then, oppressed with cold and famine, and worn down by fatigue and dismay, the imprisoned chiefs humbly supplicated the mercy of the conqueror.

"Thus, after a very doubtful struggle for the sovereignty of the Island, after twelve years of peril and calamity, the Anglo-Saxons rose triumphant over their enemies."

NOTE XI. Page 273.

At Athelney, a victor now,
Is Alfred seen again:—

"The immediate conditions which Alfred imposed were, hostages which were not reciprocal, and oaths that they should leave his dominions. These, however, were of puerile importance, because Guthrun, having got released from his confinement, might have acted with the same contempt of diplomatic and religious faith, for which his countrymen were notorious. Alfred had learnt that oaths and hostages were but bonds of sand, and therefore relied no longer upon these.

Digitized by Google

"The comprehensive mind of Alfred conceived and executed the magnanimous policy of subduing the minds of Guthrun and his followers to the peaceful obligations of agriculture, civilization, and Christianity. To effect this, he required them to exchange their paganism for the Christian religion, and he admitted them to cultivate and possess East Anglia."

NOTE XII. Page 274.

A lone church stood on Aulre's mount,
And there the King and captives came;

"After some weeks, Guthrun, to whom the conditions were acceptable, went, with thirty of his chiefs, to Aulre,* near Ethelney, where, Alfred acting as his godfather, he was baptized with the name of Ethelstan. The ceremony was completed a week after at the royal town of Waedmor. He stayed twelve days with the King as his guest, and received magnificent presents at his departure.

"Guthrun, to fulfil his engagements with Alfred, left Chippenham, and went into Gloucestershire. He remained at Cirencester a year, and then marching into East Anglia, he divided it among his soldiers, and they cultivated it."—*Hist. Anglo-Saxons.*

The following additional particulars may prove not uninteresting to the reader:—

* "Mr. Walker thinks it was the modern Aulre, an inconsiderable place near Ethelney. Wedmor was not less than twelve miles from it. At Wedmor, the white garments and mystic veil, then appropriated to baptism, were given."—*Asser*, 35, *Vit. Alf.*, 35.

Digitized by Google

"During his residence in this fenny isle (Athelney) an incident occurred, which, as the monks are particular in recording it as a proof of the improvement of his disposition, we shall venture to recite. His friends were abroad in search of food. The King was alone, reading, as his custom was, the books of scripture, and the annals of his country, or the actions of illustrious men. He was interrupted by a feeble knock at the gate, and by the lowly cry of poverty supplicating relief. He remembered the state of penury in which he had reached the same spot; he laid down his book, and called his wife to give the poor claimant some food. The queen found only one loaf in their store, which would not suffice for their family on their return from their toilsome expedition. Alfred thought the necessities of the mendicant more urgent than their own, and reserving a part of the pittance for his friends, he presented the man of poverty with the rest."—*Hist. Ang.-Sax.*

From the following passage in Gilpin's "Observations on the Western Parts of England," it would appear that it was from his seclusion on the Isle of Athelney that Alfred proceeded to the Danish camp in the disguise of a wandering minstrel.

"Where the Thone and Parret join their waters, they form between them a piece of ground, (elevated above the surrounding moors) called the Isle of Athelney. In Saxon times it was not only surrounded with water, but with woods and marshes to a great extent, and was in every part of very difficult access. Here the gallant Alfred retired in his distresses, when he fled before the Danes, after the battle of Wilton (Chippenham). At first he considered it only as a place of refuge, and sustained himself by shooting the wild deer with his arrows. But, by degrees, getting together a few of his friends, he fortified the island, and particularly the only avenue that led to it. From hence he often made successful inroads upon the Danish quarters; and retreating among the marshes eluded pursuit. From hence, too, in the habit of a minstrel, he made the celebrated excursion

Digitized by Google

to their camp, in which, under the pretence of amusing them with songs and buffooneries, he took an exact survey of their situation. He then laid his measures so judiciously, and fell upon them with so much well-directed fury, that he entirely broke their power during the remainder of his reign. In after-times, when success had crowned his enterprises, he founded a monastery on the island, in memory of the protection it had once afforded him. But its site, which had nothing to recommend it, except this personal circumstance, was in all respects so inconvenient, that it never flourished, though it existed till the times of the dissolution."

"With respect to the field of this famous battle, *Ethandune*, our most respectable topographers, Camden, Gibson, Spelman, &c., without hesitation pronounce that it is Eddington, near Westbury. But can we imagine that the West Saxons would have assembled within ten or twelve miles of the Danish army, for Eddington is not farther than this from Brixton, and have employed two days in making a march of this length, when their object was to take their enemy by surprise? * * * * It remains that we should fix this celebrated *Ethandune* at Heddington, not far from Chippenham; a place of great antiquity, as the editor of Camden proves. In this case, Alfred's army will have moved about fifteen miles to their first encampment; and about twelve, the next morning, to the field of battle. But what seems to decide this much agitated question in favour of the proposed conjecture, is a passage hitherto overlooked, in the history of Ethelward, the near relation of Alfred, in which the Danish army, here defeated, is represented to be that of Chippenham. 'Interea coaptavit bellum Alfred Rex adversus exercitus qui in Cippenhamme fuere, in loco Ethandune.'—l. IV, c. III. It is very probable that, at this time, the Danish King resided in the palace which we know to have been at Chippenham, whilst the main body of his army was encamped at Heddington, within six miles of him." —*History & Antiquities of Winchester, by Dr. Milner, F.S.A.*

Digitized by Google

THIRD CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THIRD CANTO.

THE QUANTOCK HILLS—GENERAL VIEW FROM THEIR SUMMITS—NETHER-STOWEY, COLERIDGE, ETC.—ALFOXDEN, WORDSWORTH—DUNSTER CASTLE—MINEHEAD—LUCCOMBE—HOLNICOT—RIVER HORNER — PORLOCK BAY — ASHLEY LODGE — CULBOURNE — EXMOOR—WINSFORD—PIXTON PARK—CONFLUENCE OF THE EXE AND BARLE.

I.

I stood on Quantock*—from whose lofty brow
A glorious vale is seen on either side;
Where Tone, to blend with Parret, glideth slow,
While Severn sea-ward rolls his rapid tide:—
With joy, once more, I hail those waters wide,
Where stately argosies, with pennons gay,
Bearing the world's rich treasures, are descried;
While Cambria's coast gleams with the morning ray,
And mountain-heights beyond fade into distance gray.

* A noble range of picturesque hills, about twelve miles in length, its western extremity abutting the Bristol Channel, on which the heath-cock and occasionally the red-deer are found.

Digitized by Google

II.

Here, on these hills, my spirit doth rejoice,
Like yon up-springing lark, all bliss, to be;
Inwardly singing with a quiet voice,
And musing upon all I hear and see:—
Around me lies the world's epitome—
Towns, cities, hamlets, villages, and spires;
All that for which we climb, or bend the knee—
Ambition, love, woes, wishes, and desires,
The cradles of our sons, the ashes of our sires!

III.

These are the books, the académes where man
May meditate from morn till coming night;
The story of the past with profit scan,
And learn deep wisdom, mingled with delight:
Here Nature's volume spread before his sight—
Woods, streams, fair vallies, and the mighty sea;
On Contemplation's wing he gains the height,
Where heavenly beauty may discernéd be,
Mid amaranthine bowers of blest eternity!

Digitized by Google

IV.

There is a spot whereon the eye doth rest,
The poet's eye, gazing entranc'd around;
Which he,* all-eloquent, with many a guest
Of kindred spirit, rendered classic ground:—
Mark yon gray tower, that shadowy elms surround,
There Stowey lies;[1]—amid whose rural bowers,
The lofty bard a lowly mansion found;
And 'neath its lime-tree's shade, mid garden flow'rs,
He sang his "stately songs," and lived his happier hours.

V.

Nor undelightful thus to meet again
With him we met before by Clevedon's hill;—
Here gentle Elia† listened to his strain,
While hospitality the cup would fill,
That gives a zest to joy, and softens ill:—
And he‡ was there, whose subtler power could trace
The beautiful in Art with critic-skill;
While mid the group, with bright benignant face,
Was seen the poet's friend,‖ the patriarch of the place.

* Coleridge. † Charles Lamb. ‡ Harlitt. ‖ T. Poole.

Digitized by Google

VI.

Then onward o'er that mountain-range we tread,
Whence the dark heath-cock springs—until we come
Upon the verge of sea-ward Quantock's-head;
And hence behold the temporary home*
Of Rydal's famous bard;[2]—who loved to roam
These hills and woods—and oft with him who sung
"The Ancient Marinére," until the gloam
Of silent eve—when each responsive hung,
With charméd ear intent, upon the other's tongue.

VII.

But they are gone—yet still their words remain,
Like that bright golden flower which never dies;
The true-born poet doth not live in vain,
But leads the soul through beauty's paths, to rise
Up to that "good supreme," the world denies:—
Here, mid these conscious scenes, where'er we rove,
Some kindred object to their voice replies;
Yon babbling brook, that haunted holly-grove,
Re-echo to the heart those lyrics that we love.

* Alfoxden, awhile the residence of Wordsworth.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

Lingering, we leave such memories with regret,
And turn our wandering steps towards the west;
Where long, with eager thought, our eyes were set,
To gaze on scenes with equal beauty blest:—
And now, behold! from this high ground they rest,
Carhampton, on thy hills—while wood and lea,
And tributary streams those vales invest;
From fair St. Audries,* sloping to the sea,
To where Dunkérry stands in clouded majesty.[3]

IX.

Bold, rising on an insulated height,
With deep encircling woods, all verdant, crown'd,
Thy Castle, Dunster! proudly meets my sight;[4]
Though loftier mountains grandly girt thee round:
And thou hast heard, in stormier times, the sound
Of war's hoarse trumpet, and the cannon's roar;
Where now the timid deer treads o'er thy ground,
And nought comes louder than the waves that pour
When northern winds are high, along thy level shore.

* A seat belonging to Sir P. P. Palmer Acland, Bart.

Digitized by Google

X.

Thence over Grabhurst's verdant sides we're led,
A beauteous valley lying on each hand;—
Here the swift Holn sings o'er his pebbly bed,
And there lone Minehead sits upon the land,[5]
Like some sad widow, looking o'er that strand
Where erst her merchant-barques were wont to be;
Now few, and far between, their sails expand—
Yet still the stranger, musing by the sea,
Doth ponder o'er that spot from lofty Greenaleigh.

XI.

Soon on its western verge, where slopes the hill,
We pause—and Luccombe's village lies below;[6]
There, in that soft seclusion, all is still,
Save the low murmur of a brooklet's flow:—
Then down through archéd lanes, where hollies grow,
That form a vista cool, obscure yet clear,
With lighter, quicker, step, we onward go,
Until the wanderer meets with welcome cheer,
And friendly words that fall, like music, on his ear.

Digitized by Google

XII.

And there *he** dwells, the liberal host, beside
That sacred fane, where oft his voice is heard;
In meek simplicity, unknown to pride,
His life a comment on the living word:
And when he teacheth, straight the soul is stirr'd
By Truth's persuasive strain, in earnest given;
While many a heart depress'd, that might have err'd,
Or long with woe or wavering faith have striven,
By charity is led to see its path to heaven!

XIII.

Beneath yon rustic roof,† that on the lea,[7]
Mid tufted trees and meadows green, appears,
Doth Acland oft retire—from senates free—
While all the scene a peaceful aspect wears:
Lord of surrounding lands, his presence cheers
The country wide—good deeds his thoughts engage:
With heart and hand beneficent he rears
Yon cottage-homes‡ for life declining age—
Far nobler acts than shine on Fame's emblazon'd page.

* Late Rev. — Fisher, the former Incumbent of Luccombe.

† Sir T. D. Acland's Cottage, at Holnicot, since destroyed, like a previous mansion, by fire. ‡ On Selworthy Green.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

O beauteous scenes! remote from all the din
And strife that stir the distant world around;
Promoters of that peace which dwells within,—
Once more I greet your unfrequented ground:
Like some lone deer, that late hath ta'en a wound,
And flies to deeper shades to find its rest;
So mid these quiet vales my heart hath found
Freedom from ills that noisier haunts infest;
While friendship pours its balm to soothe the troubled breast.

XV.

Hark! and you hear the Horner's echoing voice,[s]
Leaping and foaming as in sportive glee;
As from Dunkérry's side he doth rejoice
To run his course, though short, unto the sea,
Like heedless man towards eternity!
And now along those broken banks we stray,
With his bright-glancing waters winding free,—
While joining in his song to cheer the way—
Until we lingering part in Porlock's spreading bay.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

There is a pleasant spot beside the strand,*[9]
The sea in front and lofty hills behind;
And there a welcome Inn alone doth stand,
Where the tir'd traveller fit rest may find,
And feel fresh vigour from the wave-borne wind:
Here might the painter and the poet rove,
And meet congenial matter for each mind;
The power of their noble talent prove,
And bid the world admire the glorious scenes they love.

XVII.

In the deep shadow of that wooded hill,[10]
Which soars above the far-resounding shore—
Close by the gushing of a mountain-rill—
A noble lady lived†—'twas she that bore,
In early youth, the name of him who wore
The laurel-wreath of song—hither she came,
Among the shady woods of wild Kitnore
To pass the summer-hours—leaving that name
Mid Ashley's‡ bowers to live, and with her father's fame.

* Porlock-Weir. † Ada Byron, the late Countess Lovelace.
‡ Ashley Lodge.

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

Thence, by rude cliffs where ocean wide expands,
A rugged pathway leads towards a glade,
Where, 'tween high hills, a small Church* lonely stands;[11]
In early days, by rustics simply made:—
And here the world's loud voice doth ne'er invade,
So solemn is the scene, sublime, and still;—
Mid gloomy rocks, and pines that never fade,
Few sounds are heard beside a running rill,
Save when the sabbath-songs that little valley fill.

XIX.

Musing, methought here should our worship be,—
More fitting place was never form'd for prayer;
Deeper than organ's voice the surging sea,
While angel-whisperings seem to fill the air:—
Hither the children of the soil repair,
Simple in manners, and in number few;
Oh, how unlike some temples' pomp and glare,
The pride of place, rich robes and crimson'd pew;
Where humble hearts alone should seek the good and true.

* Culbourne Church.

Digitized by Google

XX.

Up steep embower'd banks ascending slow—
Bold wood-crown'd summits rising on each hand,
With the blue ocean spreading far below—
Soon on broad Exmoor's swelling hills we stand;
Where, like a rolling sea, afar expand
Alternate height and hollow—while between
Their fern-clad slopes that grace the sterile land,
Some gentle streamlet makes each valley green;
And sings a joyous song, to cheer the dreary scene.

XXI.

O bounteous Nature! wheresoe'er we rove,
However bare and lone the spot may be,
Some object will be there to claim our love,
Some foot-prints of pervading deity:
Wide spreads the gloomy waste without a tree,
Yet from its turf the sweet thyme breatheth nigh;
And the shy flock, half-wild, doth wander free—
While on its summits you may oft descry
The red-deer's antler'd head stand out against the sky.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

Rous'd from his covert near the roaring Lyn,
In autumn-days, he takes the open ground,
And boldly tries those upland heights to win,
Before the baying of the deep-mouth'd hound:
Then o'er the spacious moor, without a bound,
Pressed hotly by the gallant pack, he flies—
Until dark Culbourne's quiet woods resound
With the wild triumph of the hunters' cries,
As, mid his circling foes, the noble victim dies.

XXIII.

O'er the broad surface of that barren scene,
In early days, a gloomy forest spread;
Where, 'neath the mystic oak's deep shadowy screen,
The Druid's dread oblation slowly bled.
Ask whence these mounds? o'er which we careless tread,
Tradition tells us they are warrior's graves;—
How great soe'er their deeds, the fame is fled;
For other note, in vain deep Science craves—
The winds their requiem sing—the wild fern o'er them waves.

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

Among the Naïads of the lonely moor,
That make sweet music for the poet's ear,—
As from their founts the rapid waters pour,—
The young Exe danceth on with current clear:—
Along its winding course we follow near,
Down the wild waste, and verdant dale, until
Winsford's gray tower and village-roofs appear,
On each side shelter'd by a wooded hill,
Where all, the valley through, save Isca's stream is still.

XXV.

And there, retired, mid cottage-homes, you find
A welcome rest, close by a brooklet's side;
With shadowy elms before, and hills behind—
In prettier spot one would not wish to bide
The sultry hours that mark a summer's tide:—
Here doth the angler come, and slowly stray
By the green banks, where shadowy waters glide;
With well-dissembled fly the trout betray—
Then 'neath the "Royal Oak" wear out the pleasant day.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

Let not the restless sons of Mammon sneer
At easy joys within the rambler's reach;
To noble minds the "gentle craft" is dear—
While Nature's quiet scenes may haply teach
To loving eyes the truths that others preach:—
Has thine heart suffer'd midst the worldly throng?
Come hither—and, beneath some spreading beech,
Soothe thy seared feelings with the river's song;—
'Twill lead thee to forgive, and then forget the wrong.

XXVII.

From that sweet vale ascending*—on the brow
Of a bold hill, and backed by sheltering wood—
Swift-rushing Barle resounding far below—
In lonely state, Pixton's proud mansion stood;[12]
Amid wild views of mountain and of flood:—
Broad England boasteth not of scenes more fair,
More form'd to meet the bard's divinest mood;
Or fill the fancy of their youthful heir—†
Than all the source of song, that rose around him there.

* The Valley of the Little-Exe.
† The late Earl of Carnarvon, then Lord Porchester.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

And there, in other days, the hunters met;
Led on by Acland's venerated name:—
While some there are, who may remember yet,
When the high chivalry of Devon came,
And join'd with Somerset's, in loud acclaim,
As the loud *mort* was sounded—when the chase
Ended, in triumph o'er the noble game:—
Then near the festive-board, in lofty place,
Hung the broad-antler'd head—past monarch of his race.

XXIX.

Adown that valley, by the evening-ray,
In musing mood, our lonely course we bend—
The glad stream flowing with us all the way—
Until, at length our pleasant ramble end,
Where rapid Barle flows on with Exe to blend:—
And cheering 'tis, at close of day, to come
Where ready service doth our steps attend;—*
While, sooth to say, where'er our feet may roam,
He that no other hath, *there* only finds a home.

* A pleasant Inn on the banks of the Exe.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO THIRD CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 303.

Mark yon gray tower, that shadowy elms surround,
There Stowey lies;—

Cottle, in his "Early Recollections of S. T. Coleridge," gives the following interesting account of his visit to the latter, whilst living at Stowey:—

"In 1796, his friend, (Coleridge's) Mr. Thomas Poole, of Nether Stowey, near Bridgwater, was desirous of obtaining Mr. C. for a permanent neighbour, and recommended him to take a small house at Stowey, then to be let, at seven pounds a year, which he thought would well suit him. Mr. Poole's personal worth; his friendly and social manners; his information and taste for literature; all this, combined with the prospect of a diminished expense in his establishment, unitedly, formed such powerful inducements, that Mr. C. at once decided, and the more so, as Mr. Charles Lloyd had consented to accompany him. To this place, consequently, the whole party repaired.

"It is delightful, even at the present moment, to recall the images connected with my then visit to Stowey, (which those can best understand, who, like myself, have escaped from severe duties to a brief season of happy recreation.) Mr. Coleridge welcomed me with the warmest cordiality. He

Digitized by Google

talked of his old schoolfellow, Lamb, with affection, who had so recently left him; and regretted he had not an opportunity of introducing me to one whom he so highly valued. Mr. C. took peculiar delight in assuring me (at least, at that time,) how happy he was; exhibiting successively, his house, his garden, his orchard, laden with fruit; and also the contrivances he had made to unite his two neighbours' domains with his own.

"After the grand circuit had been accomplished, by hospitable contrivance, we approached the 'Jasmine Arbour,' when, to our gratifying surprise, we found the tripod table laden with delicious bread and cheese, surmounted by a brown jug of the true Taunton ale. We instinctively took our seats; and there must have been some downright witchery in the provision which surpassed all of its kind; nothing like it on the wide terrene, and one glass of the Taunton settled it to an axiom.

* * * * * *

While thus elevated in the universal current of our feelings, Mrs. Coleridge approached, with her fine Hartley;* we all smiled, but the father's eye beamed transcendental joy! 'But all things have an end.' Yet pleasant it is for memory to treasure up in her choicest depository a few such scenes, (these 'sunny spots' in existence!) on which the spirit may repose, when the rough adverse winds shake and disfigure all beside."

"A reference had been made by Mr. Coleridge in a letter, to the 'caballing, long and loud,' against Mr. Wordsworth, and which occasioned him to remove from Somersetshire.

"Wordsworth has been caballed against so long and so loudly, that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Alfoxden estate to let him the house after their first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at Midsummer; whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey, we know not, and yet we must; for the hills, and the

* Her infant son.

Digitized by Google

woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores would break forth into reproaches against us, if we did not strain every nerve to keep their poet among them."—*Letter from Coleridge to J. Cottle.* "*Early Recollections.*"

"Mr. W. had taken the Alfoxden House, near Stowey, for one year, (during the minority of the heir) and the reason why he was refused a continuance, by the ignorant man who had the letting of it, arose (as Mr. Coleridge informed me) from a whimsical cause, or rather a series of causes. The wiseacres of the village had, it seemed, made Mr. W. the subject of their serious conversation. One said that 'he had seen him wander about by night, and look rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills like a partridge.' Another said, 'he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand.' Another said, 'It's useless to talk, Thomas, I think he is what people call a 'wiseman' (a conjuror!)' Another said, 'You are every one of you wrong. I know what he is. We have all met him tramping away toward the sea. Would any man in his senses take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water? I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and, in these journeys, is on the lookout for some *wet* cargo!' Another very significantly said, 'I know that he has got a private *still* in his cellar, for I once passed his house, at a little better than a hundred yards distance, and I could smell the spirits, as plain as an ashen fagot at Christmas!' Another said, 'However that was, he is surely a desperd French jacobin, for he is so silent and dark, that nobody ever heard him say one word about politics!" And thus these ignoramuses drove from their village a greater ornament than will ever again be found amongst them.

"In order to continue the smile on the reader's countenance," continues Mr. Cottle, "I may be allowed to state a trifling circumstance, which at this moment forces itself on my recollection.

Digitized by Google

"A visit to Mr. Coleridge, at Stowey, in the year 1797, had been the means of my introduction to Mr. Wordsworth. Soon after our acquaintance had commenced Mr. W. happened to be in Bristol, and asked me to spend a day or two with him at Alfoxden. I consented, and drove him down in a gig. We called for Mr. Coleridge, Miss Wordsworth, and the servant, at Stowey, and they walked, while we rode on to Mr. W.'s house, (distant two or three miles) where we proposed to dine. A London Alderman would smile at our bill-of-fare. It consisted of philosophers' viands; namely, a bottle of brandy, a noble loaf, and a stout piece of cheese; and as there were plenty of lettuces in the garden, with all these comforts we calculated on doing very well.

"Our fond hopes, however, were somewhat damped, by finding that our 'stout piece of cheese' had vanished! A sturdy *rat* of a beggar, whom we had relieved on the road, with his olfactories all alive, no doubt *smelt* our cheese, and while we were gazing at the magnificent clouds, contrived to abstract our treasure! Cruel tramp! An ill return for our pence! We both wished the rind might not choke him! The mournful fact was ascertained a little before we drove into the court-yard of the house. Mr. Coleridge bore the loss with great fortitude, observing, that we should never starve with a loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy. He now, with the dexterity of an adept, (admired by his friends around) unbuckled the horse, and, putting down the shafts with a jirk, as a triumphant conclusion to his work, lo! the bottle of brandy, that had been placed most carefully behind us on the seat, from the inevitable law of gravity, suddenly rolled down, and, before we could arrest the spirituous avalanche, pitching right on the stones, was dashed to pieces! We all beheld the spectacle, silent and petrified! We might have collected the broken fragments of glass, but, the brandy! that was gone! clean gone!*

* "Did the report of the '*still*,' in the former page, originate in this broken bottle of brandy?"

Digitized by Google

"One little untoward thing often follows another, and while the rest stood musing, chained to the place, regaling themselves with the cogniac effluvium, and all miserably chagrined, I led the horse to the stable, when a fresh perplexity arose. I removed the harness without difficulty, but after many strenuous attempts, I could not get off the collar. In despair I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. W. first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but after several unsuccessful efforts he relinquished the achievement, as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but shewed no more grooming skill than his predecessors; for after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that 'the horse's head must have grown, (gout or dropsy!) since the collar was put on! for' he said, 'it was a downright impossibility for such a huge Os Frontis to pass through so narrow a collar!" Just at this instant the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'La, master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this,' when turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied, afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained.

"We were now summoned to dinner, and a dinner it was, such as every blind and starving man in the three kingdoms would have rejoiced to behold. At the top of the table stood a superb brown loaf. The centre dish presented a pile of the true Cos lettuces, and at the bottom appeared an empty plate, where the 'stout piece of cheese' ought to have stood! (cruel mendicant!) and though the brandy 'was clean gone,' yet its place was well, if not *better*, supplied by a superabundance of fine sparkling Castalian champagne! A happy thought at this time started into one of our minds, that some sauce would render the lettuces a little more acceptable, when an individual in the company recollected a question, once propounded by the

Digitized by Google

most patient of men, 'How can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?' and asked for a little of that valuable culinary article. 'Indeed, sir,' Betty replied, 'I quite forgot to buy salt.' A general laugh followed the announcement, in which our host heartily joined. This was nothing. We had plenty of other good things, and while crunching our succulents, and munching our crusts, we pitied the far worse condition of those, perchance as hungry as ourselves, who were forced to dine, alone, off either. For our next meal, the mile-off village furnished all that could be desired, and these trifling incidents present the scene, and the result, of half the little passing disasters of life."—*Cottle's Early Recollections of S. T. Coleridge.*

The Author makes no apology for inserting the following beautiful compositions, which, from their local associations, cannot but prove additionally interesting to the reader, even should he have met with them before.

"THIS LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON."

ADVERTISEMENT.

"In the June of 1797, some long-expected friends paid a visit to the Author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.

"Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Such beauties and such feelings, as had been
Most sweet to my remembrance, even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
My friends, whom I may never meet again,

Digitized by Google

On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings, arching like a bridge;—that branchless Ash,
Unsunn'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark-green file of long, lank weeds,*
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and dip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.
Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide heaven—and view again
The many-steepled track magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles †
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! ‡ for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through toil and pain,
And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! so my friend

* The Asplenium Scolopendrium, or Hart's tongue.
† The Steep and Flat Holmes. ‡ Charles Lamb.

Digitized by Google

Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wild landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; a living thing
Which acts upon the mind—and with such hues
As clothe the Almighty Spirit, when he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.
A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient Ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight; and though now the Bat
Wheels silent by, and not a Swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the Soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing

Digitized by Google

(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in the light)
Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
Flew creaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles; to whom
No sound is dissonant that tells of life."

COLERIDGE.

The above beautiful lines must have been written at Nether Stowey. To which are added the following:—addressed to his brother, the Rev. George Coleridge.

"Beside one Friend,
Beneath th' impervious covert of one Oak,
I've raised a lowly shed, and know the names
Of husband and of father; nor unhearing
Of that divine and nightly-whispering voice,
Which from my childhood to maturer years
Spake to me of predestinated wreaths,
Bright with no fading colours!

* * * * *

Oh! 'tis to me an ever-new delight
To talk of thee and thine; or when the blast
Of the shrill winter, rattling our rude sash
Endears the cleanly hearth and social bowl;
Or when as now, on some delicious eve,
We in our sweet sequester'd orchard-plot
Sit on the tree crook'd earth-ward; whose old boughs,
That hang above us in an arborous roof,
Stirr'd by the faint gale of departing May,
Send their loose blossoms slanting o'er our heads!"

"FEARS IN SOLITUDE."

"*Written in April*, 1798, *during an alarm of an Invasion.*

"A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place

Digitized by Google

No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloomless furze
Which now blooms most profusely: but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all methinks would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!
Here he might lie on fern or wither'd heath,
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best,)
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark!
That singest like an angel in the clouds.

* * * * *

O dear Britain! O my mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the god in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things:

Digitized by Google

Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being!
There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrow'd from my country. O divine
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me!

* * * * *

But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
The fruit-like perfume of the golden furze:
The light has left the summit of the hill,
Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful
Aslant the ivied beacon. Now farewell,
Farewell, awhile, O soft and silent spot!
On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
Homeward I wind my way; and lo! recall'd
From bodings that have well-nigh wearied me,
I find myself upon the brow, and pause
Startled! And after lonely sojourning
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
This burst of prospect,—here the shadowy main,
Dim-tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields, seems like society—
Conversing with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!
And now, beloved Stowey! I behold
Thy church-tower, and methinks, the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend:
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lovely cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! with light
And quicken'd footsteps thitherward I tend,
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!

Digitized by Google

And grateful, that, by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is soften'd, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind."
"NETHER STOWEY, COLERIDGE.
"*April 28th*, 1798."

HAZLITT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS VISIT TO COLERIDGE, AT NETHER STOWEY,

In the Spring of 1799.

"I arrived and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green, and hilly, and near the sea-shore. * * * In the afternoon Coleridge took me over to Alfoxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins', where Wordsworth lived. * * * * * Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the 'Lyrical Ballads,' which were still in manuscript, or in the form of 'Sybilline Leaves.' I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that over-looked my window, at the dawn of day, could

—'hear the loud stag speak.'

* * * * *

"That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strelled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the

Digitized by Google

'Thorn,' the 'Mad Mother,' and the 'Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

'In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,'

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of spring,

'While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.'

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

'Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however, (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol, at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the costume of that unconstrained

Digitized by Google

period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' There was a severe, worn, pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teazed into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire* cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's, in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life.' * * * Wordsworth, looking out of the low latticed windows, said, 'How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!' I thought within myself, 'With what eyes these poets see nature!' and ever after, when I saw the sunset stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me!

"We went over to Alfoxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was as a book where men might read strange matters,' and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both

* Query, Cheddar.

Digitized by Google

of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more dramatic, the other more lyrical. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption.

"Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of a nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey, and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark, by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*."

"It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the coast of the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He 'followed in the chase, like a dog who hunts, not like one who made up the cry.' He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches; was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound, that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me

Digitized by Google

his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion, the whole way; yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's, or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the king, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right,* a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—(our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue)—by the Blue Anchor, through Minehead and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We, however, knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The views in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills, with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon, and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the 'Ancient Mariner.' At Linton the character of the sea coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place

* Dunster must have been on their *left*, in their way from the Blue Anchor to Minehead.

Digitized by Google

called the *Valley of Rocks*, (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fret-work of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunder storm came on while we were at the Inn, and Coleridge was running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the Valley of Rocks, but as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the 'Death of Abel,' but they had relinquished the design.

"In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriantly in an old-fashioned parlour, on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and flowers that had produced it. * * * It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the 'Seasons,' lying in a window seat, on which Coleridge exclained, 'That is true fame!' * * *

"We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark."

We conclude these Notes on Coleridge and his residence at Stowey, with the following just and appropriate observations of Cottle, on the pecuniary difficulties which too often beset men of genius, doubtless suggested by those of the subject of his Recollections.

"Some apology, or propitiation, may be necessary toward those who regard every approximation to poverty, not as a misfortune, but a crime. But pecuniary difficulties, especially

Digitized by Google

as occurring in early life, and not ascribable to bad conduct, reflect no discredit on men of genius. Many of them, subsequently, surmounted their first embarrassments by meritorious exertions; and some of our first men (like travellers, after having successfully passed through regions of privation and peril) delight even to recall their former discouragements; and, without the shame that luxuriates alone in little minds, undisguisedly to tell of seasons, indelible in their memories, when, in the prostration of hope, the wide world appeared one desolate waste! but they ultimately found, that these seasons of darkness, (however tenaciously retained by memory) in better times, often administer a new and refreshing zest to present enjoyment. Despair, therefore, ill becomes one who has follies to bewail, and a God to trust in. Johnson and Goldsmith, with numerous others, at some seasons were plunged deep in the waters of adversity; but halcyon days awaited them; and even those sons of merit and misfortune, whose pecuniary troubles were more permanent, in the dimness of retrospection, only stand out, invested in softer hues.

"Cervantes is not the less read, because the acclamations of praise were heard by him in his abodes of penury. Butler, Otway, Collins, Chatterton, and Burns, and men like them, instead of suffering in public estimation from the difficulties they encountered, absolutely challenge in every generous mind an excess of interest from the very circumstances that darkened the complexion of their earthly prospects.

"In corroboration of this remark, in our own day, the son of Crabbe, who must have cherished the deepest solicitude for his father's reputation, has laid bare to general inspection his parent's early perplexities, by which impartial disclosures we behold the individual in his deepest depressions; worth enriched by trial, and greatness, by a refining process, struggling successfully with adversity. Does the example of such a man, nobly bearing up against the pressures that surrounded him, inflict obduracy on our hearts? On the contrary, while we feelingly

Digitized by Google

sympathize with the poet, and deplore the tardy hand of deliverance, we pause only to transfer a reflex portion of praise on him whose magnanimous conduct has furnished so ample a scope for the tenderest emotions of our nature."

NOTE II. PAGE 304.

—the temporary home
Of Rydal's famous bard;—

"ALFOXDEN, NEAR NETHER STOWEY, SOMERSET,
"*August* 14*th*, 1797.

"Here we are," says Miss Wordsworth, in a letter to a friend, bearing the above date, "in a large mansion, in a large park, with seventy head of deer around us. But I must begin with the day of leaving Racedown, to pay Coleridge a visit. You know how much we were delighted with the neighbourhood of Stowey." "There is everything there," she says, in a previous letter, 4th July, 1797, "sea, woods, wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall, in a dell formed by steep hills, covered by full-grown timber-trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the lakes." In her next letter (of August 14th) Miss Wordsworth continues: "The evening that I wrote to you, William and I had rambled as far as this house, and pryed into the recesses of our little brook, but without any more fixed thoughts upon it than some dreams of happiness in a little cottage, and passing wishes that such a place might be found

Digitized by Google

out. We spent a fortnight at Coleridge's, in the course of that time we heard that this house was to let, and took it. Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society. It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden.

"The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. The garden is at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way. In front is a little court, with grass plot, gravel walk, and shrubs; the moss-roses were in full beauty a month ago. The front of the house is to the south, but it is screened from the sun by a high hill which rises immediately from it. This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. From the end of the house we have a view of the sea, over a woody meadow country; and exactly opposite the window, where I now sit, is an immense wood, whose round top from this point has exactly the appearance of a mighty dome. In some parts of this wood there is an under-grove of hollies, which are now very beautiful. In a glen at the bottom of the wood is the waterfall of which I spoke, a quarter of a mile from the house. We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intersected with hedge-rows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries, or oak wood, which are cut for charcoal. * * * Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops; the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity—they are perfectly smooth, without rocks."

"Such was the place," observes the Editor of his Memoirs, "in which Wordsworth now commenced his residence, and where he remained for about a year; a period which he

Digitized by Google

describes 'as a very pleasant and productive time of his life.'

"Many of his smaller pieces were composed at Alfoxden, and are descriptive of it and its neighbourhood.

"'The Night Piece,' beginning, 'The sky is overcast,' was composed on the road between Nether Stowey and Alfoxden extempore. I distinctly recollect," he (Wordsworth) says, in 1834, "the very moment I was struck as described, 'he looks up at the clouds.'

"The 'Anecdote for Fathers,' showing how children may be betrayed by parents into a habit of telling falsehoods, was suggested in front of the house at Alfoxden. The boy was Basil (a child of Mr. Basil Montagu), who lived under Mr. Wordsworth's care.

"The name of Kilve, in the poem, is from a village on the Bristol Channel, about a mile from Alfoxden; and the name of Liswyn Farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye.

"Speaking of the poem, 'We are Seven,' he says 'This was written at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798.

"I will here mention (says Mr. Wordsworth) one of the most noticeable facts in my own poetic history, and that of Mr. Coleridge's.

"'In the autumn of 1797, he, my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden, with a view to visit Linton, and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the 'New Monthly Magazine,' set up by Phillips, the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills, towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of 'The Ancient Mariner,' founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested. * * * We began the composition together,

Digitized by Google

on that, to me, memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

'And listen'd like a three years' child;
The Mariner had his will.'

* * * We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many pleasant, and some of them droll enough, recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden.'

"Wordsworth," says his Editor, "refers to these and other rambles in the company of Coleridge, as follows:—

'Beloved friend!
When looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any livliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her silvan combs:
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable Thorn.'

Among other poems composed about the same time were the following, of which the Author communicated the following particulars:—

"*The Thorn*—Alfoxden, 1798—arose out of my observing on the ridge of Quantock Hill, on a stormy day, a Thorn, which I had often passed in calm and bright weather without noticing it. I said to myself, cannot I, by some invention, do as much to make this Thorn prominently an impressive object as the

Digitized by Google

storm has made it to my eyes at this moment? I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity. Sir George Beaumont painted a picture from it, which Wilkie thought his best. He gave it to me; though, when he saw it several times at Rydal Mount afterwards, he said, 'I could make a better, and would like to paint the same subject over again.' The sky in this picture is nobly done, but it reminds one too much of Wilson. The only fault, however, of any consequence, is the female figure, which is too old and decrepit for one likely to frequent an eminence on such a call."

Simon Lee.—"This old man had been huntsman to the Squires of Alfoxden, which, at the time we occupied it, belonged to a minor. The old man's cottage stood on the common, a little way from the entrance to the park. But, in 1841, it had disappeared. Many other changes had taken place in the adjoining village, which I could not but notice with a regret more natural than well-considered. Improvements but rarely appear such to those who, after long intervals of time, revisit places they have had much pleasure in. It is unnecessary to add, the fact was as mentioned in the poem; and I have, after an interval of forty-five years, the image of the old man as fresh before my eyes as if I had seen him yesterday. The expression, when the hounds were out, 'I dearly love their voice,' was, word for word, from his own lips."

Expostulation and Reply.—"This poem is a favourite among the Quakers, as I have learnt on many occasions. It was composed in front of the house at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798.

The Tables Turned.—"Composed at the same time."

A Whirl-blast from behind the Hill.—"Observed in the holly-grove at Alfoxden, where these verses were written, in the spring of 1798. I had the pleasure of again seeing, with dear friends, this grove in unimpared beauty forty-one years after."

The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman.—"Written at Alfoxden, in 1798, where I read Hearne's Journey with great

Digitized by Google

interest. It was composed for the volume of Lyrical Ballads."

The Last of the Flock.—"Composed at the same time, and for the same purpose. The incident occurred in the village of Holford, close by Alfoxden."

The Idiot Boy.—Alfoxden, 1798.—"The last stanza, 'The cocks did crow, and the moon did shine so cold,' was the foundation of the whole. The words were reported to me by my dear friend Thomas Poole; but I have since heard the same reported of other idiots. Let me add, that this long poem was composed in the groves of Alfoxden, almost extempore; not a word, I believe, being corrected, though one stanza was omitted. I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments, for, in truth, I never wrote any thing with so much glee."*

Lines written in Early Spring, 1798.—"Actually composed while I was sitting by the side of the brook that runs down the Comb, in which stands the village of Alford, through the grounds of Alfoxden. It was a chosen resort of mine."

To my Sister.—"Composed in front of Alfoxden House * * The larch mentioned in the first stanza was standing when I revisited the place, in May, 1841, more than forty years after."*

NOTE III. Page 305.

To where Dunkérry stands in clouded majesty.

"The scenery of the Hundred of Carhampton is mountainous and romantic in a high degree. Its principal feature is Dunkerry, a very large and high mountain, lying about eight miles south from Minehead. From the church, at Wooton-Courtenay, the ascent to its summit is three miles, and is very

* From MS. Notes, by I. F., dictated by the poet. See the Memoirs, vol. I. Alfoxden.

Digitized by Google

steep. Its base is about twelve miles in circumference. The highest part is stated in the Report of the Ordnance Trigonometrical Survey, to be sixteen hundred and sixty-eight feet above the level of the sea, and with the exception of the Cawsand Beacon, in the northern part of Dartmoor, which is stated in the same report to be seventeen hundred and ninety-two feet, is, it is believed, the highest land in the West of England.

"It affords pasturage for sheep, and turf, the principal fuel of the labouring classes in the neighbourhood. In many places it is covered with the whortleberry plant, several species of erica, nnd some rare bog and other mosses.

"Dunkerry affords such an extensive and noble prospect as to merit a particular description. In a clear day the view extends, on the south-west, to the high lands near Plymouth; and on the north, to the Malvern Hills, in Worcestershire: two parts of the country, which are more than two hundred miles distant from each other. On the west and north-west, the Bristol Channel, for nearly one hundred and thirty miles in length, lies under the eye, with the greater part of South Wales, from Monmouthshire down to Pembrokeshire, rising in a fine amphitheatre beyond it. To the east and south, the greater part of Somerset, Dorset, and Devon, with some parts of Hants and Wilts appear in view. When the air is clear and serene, and not too bright, the line which bounds the horizon cannot be less than five hundred miles in circumference, circumscribing fifteen counties.

"On the top are the remains of those beacons which were formerly erected on this elevated spot, in order to alarm the country in times of civil discord, or foreign invasion. Hence the highest point of this hill is called Dunkerry-Beacon. It is often covered with clouds, and then becomes a stupendous local barometer; for on such occasions rain is certain speedily to follow."—*Savage's Hist. of Hund. of Carhampton.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE IV. Page 305.

Thy Castle, Dunster! proudly meets my sight;

"The first William de Mohun having seated himself in the territory which he had acquired from his victorious sovereign, by dispossessing its Saxon owner, Aluric, not only rebuilt the Castle, but," says Collinson, "added largely to the buildings of the town.

"The ancient Castle would seem to have been a quadrangular structure, and it is probable that the keep was circular. Immediately on passing through the present gateway, on the right is the ancient doorway of the Castle yet remaining, studded with iron; and on the right of this ancient door are the ruins of one of the towers which flanked the entrance into the Castle. These, I believe, are all the remains now extant of the once celebrated Castle of the Mohuns.

"Sir Hugh Luttrell, the first of this family who possessed Dunster Castle, lived here in his old age, and kept great hospitality. He rebuilt a considerable part of the Castle.

"George Luttrell, Esq., who was Sheriff of the County of Somerset, in the thirty-sixth of Elizabeth, added greatly to the buildings of the Castle.

"The present Dunster Castle was built about the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1580). The principal gateway is of the time of Edward III.

"During the civil commotions in the reign of Charles I., the King's army, under the Marquis of Hertford, marched into Somersetshire about the middle of June, 1643, and that nobleman took up his head-quarters at Orchard-Portman, and in three days after obtained possession of Taunton, Bridgwater, and Dunster Castle, the latter being so much stronger than both the others, that it could not have been forced; yet," says Lord Clarendon, "by the dexterity of Francis Wyndham, who

Digitized by Google

wrought upon the fears of Mr. Luttrell, the owner, it was, with as little bloodshed as the others, delivered up to his majesty; into which Castle the Marquess placed him as governor, who took it, as he well deserved.

"While Colonel Wyndham was governor, the prince, afterwards Charles II., paid him a visit. 'Lord Digby, by his letters to the prince's council, signified his majesty's pleasure that the prince should stay at Dunster Castle and encourage the new levies, it being (I presume) not known at court that the plague, which had driven him from Bristol, was as hot at Dunster town, just under the Castle.' From hence the prince went to Barnstaple, and as Taunton was in the hands of the parliamentary army, it is most likely he travelled on horseback over Exmoor forest.

"When the siege of Taunton had been raised, in the spring of the year 1646, and the garrison sufficiently recovered from the fatigues and hardships they had endured from the straitness of that siege, Colonel Blake, the governor, marched with a party of his own soldiers, and some companies from the neighbouring garrisons, to Dunster Castle.

"This fortress stands on an eminence of very difficult access to an army intending to besiege it, and it was defended by a garrison commanded by Colonel Wyndham, as zealous and resolute against the Parliament as any in the King's interest; but Colonel Blake soon forced the Royalists to surrender, and he thus reduced a large tract of country, inhabited by a numerous population, who were, however, extremely ill-affected to the Parliament. This service being accomplished, Blake returned in triumph to Taunton, in April, 1646.

"On the 1st July, 1650, the celebrated William Prynne was committed close prisoner to Dunster Castle, for opposition to Cromwell and the Parliament.

"The Castle, to this day the residence of the Luttrell family, stands on the south-eastern side of a conical hill called the Torr, commanding scenes of the greatest interest and beauty,

Digitized by Google

not surpassed by any in the kingdom. It has been truly observed, 'the ruined turrets of Kenilworth shew that once, as the proud towers of Warwick and Berkeley do still, that as castellated structures, they were superior to Dunster as it now is; but in point of local scenery they fall far short of it, as well in picturesque beauty as in stately romantic grandeur.'"

Gilpin, in his "Observations on the Western Counties," has the following:—

"As we turned a little from the sea, Dunster Castle, the seat of Mr. Lutterell, opened before us, at about the distance of half a mile, and made a striking appearance. It is, indeed, on the whole, one of the grandest artificial objects we had met with on our journey. Its towers, which are picturesque, arise near the summit of a woody hill, which seems connected with another hill, much higher, though it is in fact detached from it. Their apparent union makes the composition more agreeable, and is of great advantage to the view. It takes away that idea of art which an insulated hill would be apt to raise. The consequence of this grand object is greatly increased by a *dead flat* between it and the eye. *Broken ground* in itself is more beautiful; but a *flat* often carries the eye more directly to a capital object, with which also it often very agreeably contrasts. I speak, however, undecidedly, because sometimes it is otherwise. But in the present case we thought the approach by a flat had a good effect.

"From the terrace of the Castle we had a great variety of amusing landscapes; though nothing very interesting. We obtained a good idea, however, of the form of the country; and found that Dunster Castle, which stands high, is surrounded, though at a considerable distance, by grounds that are much higher. In this amusing circle round the walls of the Castle we had three distinct species of landscape; a *park scene;* a tract of *mountainous country;* and a *sea-coast.*

"In the time of the civil wars, Dunster Castle had a respectable name, and was considered as one of the strongest of the

Digitized by Google

King's garrisons in the West. When his affairs were in the wane after the battle of Naseby, it was fixed on as the best place of refuge for the Prince of Wales; but the plague immediately breaking out in the town of Dunster, some other place of security was sought for."—*Gilpin's Observations on the Western Counties.*

NOTE V. Page 306.

And there lone Minehead sits upon the land,

The parish of Minehead lies along the southern shore of the Bristol Channel. Sheltered from the north, open to the south, and the air rendered salubrious by the sea breezes, the winters are mild, and vegetation earlier here than in England generally. Geraniums have been known to live unsheltered through a mild winter, and myrtles of every kind grow here in the open air, and require to be well pruned, or they would get large and rude.

The town, which stands on the southern slope, and at the foot of Greenaleigh hill, is a sea-port borough (now disfranchised) and market town.

The trade of Minehead, once considerable, is now greatly reduced. But "to a certain class who wish to visit the seaside, Minehead offers many advantages; lodgings are low, provisions are good and cheap; there is a fine sandy beach, and they will not be annoyed by the company of the frivolous part of the fashionable world, of whom so many are to be found in some of our watering-places at particular seasons of the year." *Savage.*

Digitized by Google

NOTE VI. Page 306.

We pause—and Luccombe's village lies below;

"The village of Luccombe, or East-Luccombe, as it is generally called, stands at the foot of Dunkerry, in a small but beautiful valley, full of fine timber trees, and surrounded on all sides, except towards the north, by high lands. A small stream, which rises on Dunkerry, passes through the village, and after joining another called the Horner, at the hamlet of Bossington, in Porlock, falls into the sea near Bossington point."—*Savage.*

NOTE VII. Page 307.

Beneath yon rustic roof, that on the lea,

Holnicot, from the Anglo-Saxon *Holega*, holen, the holm tree, a species of Ilex, the evergreen oak; and cot, a cottage; that is, the cottage among the holm trees; a hamlet and manor in the parish of Selworthy, situate in the road leading from Minehead to Porlock.

The noble old mansion at this village, belonging to Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, Bart., was accidently destroyed by fire in the year 1799.

Sir T. D. Acland, Bart., of Kellerton, in the County of Devon, is the present Lord of Holnicot.

Digitized by Google

NOTE VIII. PAGE 308.

Hark! and you hear the Horner's echoing voice,

"The hamlet of Horner* is so called from a considerable mountain-stream of the same name. The picturesque and romantic valley, through which the Horner winds, is bounded by very high hills, clothed with magnificent woods; it is in some parts narrow, in others expanding into large reaches of flat ground, covered with majestic oak, ash, and forest trees of every description, interspersed with the euonymus, holly, white-thorn, and mountain-ash. This stream is broken perpetually by masses of rock obstructing its channel, and forming it into a series of cascades. Every tree is a lesson for the pencil."—*Savage.*

NOTE IX. PAGE 309.

There is a pleasant spot beside the strand,

The village of Porlock-Wear stands on the sea-shore, about a mile and a half from East Porlock, and is properly its port. Here is a good inn, and a small quay.

This village is situated at the corner of a beautiful bay, terminating a sort of semi-circular area, which is almost entirely inclosed by hills, and smiles with verdure and cultivation. Bossington Point, forming the eastern and opposite quarter, presents a grand scene of craggy rocks, some torn from the main land; others hollowed into caverns, by frequent

* Horner—from the British Hwrnwr, the Snorer, from the peculiar sonorous notes it makes in its course.—*Tour in Quest of Genealogy.*

Digitized by Google

tempests, and the rest elevating themselves in the boldest manner to the height of full three hundred feet. On the eminences above the villages there are hanging woods of beech, oak, and elm, which, with the crags peeping above the foliage, have an uncommon richness and luxuriance of effect. * * *

What a sweet train of peaceful, yet elevated ideas such scenes will naturally excite! These are the objects which captivate the contemplative man. When recalled to the portal of that wide mansion where the "busy hum" of the more active part of his species is heard, it is not to be wondered at if he should often look back with emotions of regret and tenderness to the serenity of nature. On the other hand, he who has been involved, during a long period, in the multifarious cares, and inquietudes, and contentions of life, will be incapable of feeling the refined sensations which the former fosters with so much ardour; nor will he

"——— Exempt from public haunts,
Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Maton's Tour in the Western Counties.

NOTE X. Page 309.

In the deep shadow of that wooded hill.

"The road to Lord King's (Earl Lovelace) cottage, *Ashley Lodge*, creeps through the woods which clothe the steep cliffs to the eastward of Culbone, and presents at every step a variety of curious plants, the rare production of these romantic regions; * * * among which is the whortle-berry plant full of its cool, refreshing, delicious fruit. His lordship's house is placed, like an eagle's nest, in the cleft of a rock. The rough slope,

Digitized by Google

that forms the western extremity of Porlock Bay, is the spot chosen for this singular mansion. Half way up this steep, a level platform has been made with great labour and proportionate expense, about a quarter of an acre perhaps in extent, and a small castellated dwelling erected upon it. The thick woods that cover the face of this abrupt descent are here cleared away, and a beautiful view opened of Porlock Bay, and the Bristol Channel.

"Woodcocks are found here in great numbers at the proper season—and game generally is plentiful in this neighbourhood; while the woods we have been speaking of are noted harbours for the red deer of Exmoor Forest."—*Warner.*

NOTE XI. Page 310.

Where 'tween high hills, a small Church lonely stands;

Warner, in his "Walk through some of the Western Counties," has the following passage:—

"After continuing five or six miles on these hills, with a noble view, always before us, of the sea and the coast of Wales, which now began to fade away in the distance, we turned our steps towards the coast, and descended a rapid steep to Culbone.

"A small cove, of an oval form, opened upon us, the bottom of which is formed by a little verdant carpet of two or three acres. Around this hollow, the hills on every side, save on that which is next to the sea, tower up in a direction nearly perpendicular, to the sublime height of twelve or thirteen hundred feet, fretted with jutting rocks, and laden with venerable woods. *Here* the solemn shade of the oak is relieved by the bright berry of the mountain-ash; and *there* the light satin of the airy birch is chastised by the gloom of the melan-

Digitized by Google

choly yew; whilst the feathering fir and luxuriant beech lend their contrasting foliage to give a wide variety to the enchanting scene.

"At the mouth of the cove the land suddenly falls to the shore, in an abrupt descent of four or five hundred feet, rugged with the enormous crags of rock, but enlivened with verdure and foliage quite to the beach.

"In the centre of the little recess, thus surrounded and defended from the intrusion of the stranger, stands the little Church of Culbone; one of the least, if not the very least, in the kingdom; a gothic structure, thirty-three feet in length, and twelve feet in breadth, with a churchyard of proportionate dimensions stretching around it, appropriately ornamented with broken modest grave-stones, and the remains of an ancient stone cross. Two cottages, planted just within the consecrated ground, are its only companions in this secluded dell.

"Surely never was a spot better calculated for the indulgence of the meditative faculty than Culbone churchyard. Every circumstance around leads the mind to thought, and soothes the bosom to tranquillity. The deep murmur of the ocean-tide, rising from beneath, but softened in its lengthened course, falls gently on the ear, which lists with equal rapture to the broken mysterious whisper of the waving woods above."

NOTE XII. Page 314.

In lonely state, Pixton's proud mansion stood;

The following description of Pixton, and the character of the surrounding district—written by Lord Porchester (the late Earl of Carnarvon)—will better illustrate this part of the county,

Digitized by Google

and be more gratifying to the reader than anything which the Author himself could say on the subject.

"O Pixton! seen e'en now in landscape bright,
How fair thy scenes beneath the summer light!
My native mountains! which I yet survey,
Beloved scenes of careless childhood, say,
With beating heart, how many a reckless day
Has mark'd my boyish step, delighted, bend
Where Hadden's heights of purple heath ascend;
Where Hawkridge's wild sullen wastes extend,
And verdant Storidge to the thundering wave
His mighty mass of oaken forest gave;
By Haddeo's foaming flood and Danebrook's tide,
That parted once a rival people's pride,
And Ella's native woods—beloved scene—
Scenes where my boyhood's happiest hours have been,
A moment give the glow of earliest life,
And fire my strain to tell of mountain strife!

And thou, dark moor,* beneath whose lowering sky
The cheerless mists of Autumn ever lie;
Who roams thy vast and desolated round,
Sees scarce a hut, nor hears one social sound:—
Who finds him guideless on that dreary way,
When sinks from heaven the blessed orb of day,
May never chance to quit thy lonesome site,
But bid to all he loves a long good night.
Here have I heard, in summer's liveliest glow,
Mid hail and mist, the raging tempest blow;
Eternally on hoarse-resounding shore,
The infant Exe with tide impetuous roar.
Sole tenant of that stern uncultured space,
I've seen the startled monarch of the chase,

* Exmoor.

Digitized by Google

Roused by fierce foeman from his lonely lair,
With mien majestic, slow and stately bear
His step to earth—his antlers in the air.

Away, away! o'er highland, stream, and brake,
I hear the opening hounds wild music make;
The deer uproused goes nobly down the wind,
The bursting horn peals merrily behind,
O'er boundless moor, and up the mountain's breast,
Nor panting steed nor wearied horseman rest;
The train falls back, the time brooks no delay;
While laggards pause, ye fearless few away!
Even now the chase is up, the stag at bay;
I hear the deep death-note, the bugle-call,
Proclaim from far the antler'd monarch's fall.

Some ancient few recall the loftier day,
When came in scarlet hosts the brave array;
O'er Hadden's mountain, when my Grandsire past,
A thousand gallants rallied at his blast;
To Hawkridge hills, at Acland's glad acclaim,
The crowding chivalry of Devon came;—
Who own'd the West, nor knew of Acland's name?
In Pixton's woods the chase was fierce and strong,—
In Pixton's halls the wassail loud and long;
At night their limbs on couch of heather spread,
The mountain fern wild pillow for their head;
And if they listed melody, might hear
Our rushing Barle make music for their ear.
Alas! those hardier times are gone, and few
With fitting zeal our Fathers' sports renew;
For twice two hundred years, their gallant train
Exulting swept the Crown-protected plain;
These eyes, that loved that field of sylvan war,
Its rights borne down, its shrinking limits saw,
And mourned the last of Devon's forest law.

Digitized by Google

Then twice o'er Hadden's heights of heathery pride,
That chase, of immemorial honour died;
And twice the spirit of the mountains came,
Forbade to fall and saved the lingering flame:
Expiring now its latest embers lie;—
Awake, bold sons of Devon! let not die
That remnant of our Fathers' chivalry!

O Pixton! welcome are thy scenes to me,
Thou last resort of old fidelity,—
The ties that bound the vassal to his lord,
Firm as in fight the trueman to his sword,
From sire to son, without one prayer for change,
One wish beyond his own dark moors to range,
For softer scenes those nobler ties are fled,
The spirit of a loftier age is dead.
Here when on Ella's heights the sun is low,
And lengthening shadows lie along its brow,
I tread the fields my thoughtless childhood stray'd,
Each long-loved haunt, each well-remember'd glade,
The fever'd hopes and schemes of later day,
Its headlong pride and passions pass away;
My soul reverts to times of little care,
And thou, loved Mother! thou alone art there!
I only mark the woods she sought, the shore
Dear to the friend, the parent—now no more:
Light, tearless days! when, life and fancy new,
Each wish was pure, as every thought was true;
I deem'd no coming ill my heart could tame,
And nothing new of sorrow—save the name.

Time was, thy mountains had not blest my sight
For many a rolling year: when on that night
I paused on Hadden's unforgotten height,

Digitized by Google

Mark'd the deep shadow of his mighty woods,
And caught the loud roar of his rushing floods,
Came dearer to my soul those sounds, than all
The melting melody of courtly hall."

The subjoined extracts are appended as Notes to the above passage:

"The estate and house of Pixton belong to my father, Lord Carnarvon. They are situated near the borders of Exmoor, in a country proverbial for its romantic scenery. The neighbouring hills covered with heath, with ash, but principally with oak copse, intermingled with the forest tree, fringing the banks of numerous torrents, recall, under a softened aspect, the beauties of Alpine scenery. The origin of the word Pixton is ancient, and not known with certainty; it is supposed to have been once written Pixie town, or the town of the Fairies, a race that exists in popular belief, and is designated by the mountaineers of the district by the name of Pixies. A wood still retains the name of Pixie wood: in this instance the word has been preserved entire; a circumstance which leaves little ground to doubt that Pixton had a similar origin."

"The immense extent of Exmoor divides us, like an ocean, from the world beyond. Before the inclosure, which took place five or six years ago,* it presented a most desolate appearance; in parts neither man, nor the industry of man, enlivened the unvarying solitude of these wastes; but, as far as the eye could reach, a monotonous extent of moor bounded the horizon: parts, indeed, of the forest are gracefully undulated, and covered with fern; but even here the hillocks so nearly resemble each other, and the general uniformity of aspect is so great, that riding in a straightforward direction, I have with difficulty persuaded myself that I had not again returned to a part of the moor which I had left some time before. There are few of the

*About 1820

Digitized by Google

oldest natives thoroughly acquainted with it; and persons who have resided for years on its borders, have lost their way in venturing too far: instances have, indeed, occurred, where strangers crossing it without a guide, and with little or no local knowledge, have been benighted and lost in the bogs, which are in reality dangerous to an incautious traveller, but whose reputation for depth and extent has armed the moor with greater terrors than it really possesses. This character of seclusion is slowly wearing away. The moor was a few years ago sold by the Crown; the work of inclosure has already commenced; stone fences have been erected, and some portions of land reclaimed. Many persons are of opinion that this measure will ultimately prove of great public utility. I have no sanguine expectation that the country will experience any real benefit from the sale of this territory: the large flocks of sheep which grazed over the plain will probably decrease; it supported a race of wild ponies, hardy and admirably adapted to the rugged nature of the surrounding country, which has already disappeared; while the inclemency of the climate, and the poverty of the soil, may render the cultivation of the land, to any considerable extent, vexatious and unprofitable."

"The red deer, once so common over England, has been long restricted to these districts: till this year, the last of the old stag-hunting establishments was still an honourable provincial distinction, and was once regarded with pride and affection by the aristocracy of the surrounding country. The hind-hunting commenced on the 10th of April, and ended on the 20th of May; stag-hunting commenced on the 20th of August, and terminated with September; when autumn hind-hunting recommenced, and continued till the rains set in, and the waters forbade further operations. The harbourers, or persons appointed to go round the coverts, and mark the slot or tread of the deer, arrived early in the morning, and communicated the result of their investigations. If they had been successful in

Digitized by Google

tracking a deer to the covert, and had not sloted him out of it, it was then customary to beat such coverts with a couple of old hounds, called tufters, and so rouse the monarch from his lair. This moment was, perhaps, the proudest of the chase. Few sights that the sporting world can exhibit, could equal the scene that presented itself when the stag broke covert, bearing his antlers high in the air, and proceeding across the moor with a stately pace, amid the shout of the field, and the crash of the hounds. The thorough-bred stag-hound is a larger animal, and in every respect superior to the fox-hound; his note is deeper, more melodious, I may say almost thrilling, and the effect produced by the opening roar of the pack must be heard, but cannot be described. Sometimes, it is true, the deer pursued a beaten track, and the spirit of the chase degenerated; but he frequently led through wood, through torrent, and every wild variety of mountain scenery, clothed at that period of the year in the rich garb of summer. Sometimes leaving the forest country entirely, he led across the moor, when the bursts were always bold, the sport animated, and the runs sometimes tremendous. There, where the stag is at a little distance, confounded with the plain, from the similarity of colouring, I have distinguished his broad antlers resting against the sky as he stretched across the country: when hard pressed he sometimes plunged into the sea, and swam a considerable distance; but his fate was generally destined to the bed of some mountain-torrent, where he stood at bay, and defended himself against the hounds with much gallantry. Some of the old customs, such as presenting the hanger, blooding the novice, &c., were still kept up. One of my earliest recollections was the introduction of the stag's head at Pixton, in the evening, which was carried round the table, as a memorial and trophy of the day's exploits. But public spirit had scarcely declined at that time.

"So well protected were the coverts, that I remember it was said that eighty deer were killed in one season, about that

Digitized by Google

period when Lord Graves directed the hunt, which was afterwards supported by Lord Fortescue, at his sole expense. During the last few years Mr. Lucas has been master of the pack; and great praise is due to his meritorious exertions in behalf of an establishment, whose existence he has prolonged, though he could not avert its fate. Mr. Knight has endeared himself to all who have the preservation of the red deer at heart, by the spirit and liberal feeling he has shewn in the cause."

"The hounds were maintained for more than sixty years by my grandfather, and great-grandfather Sir Thomas Acland. At that period, when the aristocracy were devoted to the sport, gentlemen crowded from all parts of Devonshire, to participate in this noble diversion. This was the most brilliant era of the establishment, which he supported at his sole expense: during the day the field was numerously and gallantly attended; the pack was excellent, and a spirit of magnificence was carried into all the details of the chase. He retained performers on the French horns, who always attended and played the double or treble mort, and the whole recheat in concert, while all the old ceremonies of the field were formally observed. In the evening his brother sportsmen were entertained in his house, with all the feudal hospitality of that time: the stag's head was produced with a silver cup in his mouth, out of which the favourite toast was drunk; and

'He was deem'd a laggard soul
Who shunn'd to quaff the sparkling bowl.'

In his time, herds of deer were seen collected together. His property was extensive, and in the heart of the stag-hunting country; he exercised the forest rights which prevailed over Exmoor, but have been lately extinguished: but his own devotion to the cause, and the attachment which then existed among all classes to the sport, were the main causes of its

Digitized by Google

prosperity. It is painful to revert from this fortunate period to the closing days of the establishment. Its fall must be attributed to the combined effect of several causes:—Firstly, to the disafforestment of Exmoor, and the extinction of the forest rights, and to the inclosure of large tracts of land over which these animals were accustomed to range, undisturbed and unobserved by any eye. Secondly, to the decline of public spirit, and a growing indifference to this manly sport. Thirdly, to the heat of party, and to a very mistaken opinion, that, because such an establishment was aristocratic in its origin, it is, therefore, injurious to the interests of the community, and oppressive to the people: but the last and most decisive cause of its decline, is to be found in the supineness of some of the landed proprietors, who had formerly protected the deer; and in the undisguised hostility of others, who, if report speak true, have not scrupled to sanction their destruction, and offer an unnecessary insult to every gentleman who yet adhered to the ancient sport of the country." *

* This noble sport has been again revived, under the spirited management of Mordaunt Fenwick Bisset, Esq., Bagborough House, Somerset.

Digitized by Google

FOURTH CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FOURTH CANTO.

BLEADON HILL; THE WELLINGTON COLUMN—VALE OF TAUNTON-DEANE—JORDANS; SPEKE, DISCOVERER OF THE SOURCE OF THE NILE — CRICKET LODGE; ADMIRAL VISCOUNT BRIDPORT — ST. RANE'S HILL—HINTON-HOUSE AND PARK—THE VILLAGE; EARLY REMINISCENCES—CONCLUSION.

I.

On Bleadon's brow a lofty column stands,[1]
That overlooks the Tone's rich vale below;
Uprais'd by patriotic hearts and hands
To him whose prowess dealt the deadliest blow
To Europe's conqueror and England's foe!
What native breast feels not the ennobling flame
Of freedom in his veins more proudly glow,
When gazing hence upon that spot, whose name*
Is ever blended with the mighty hero's fame!

* Wellington.

Digitized by Google

II.

Here while I stand where Wellington hath stood,*
What glorious visions pass before my sight!
Not for broad empire, bent on scenes of blood—
In nobler cause, contending for the right,
He mov'd, the guiding spirit of the fight:—
Where'er he came, from each ensanguin'd field
Gaul's ravening eagles wing'd their speedy flight;
The Liberator's sword 'twas his to wield,
And o'er the nations spread his strong defensive shield.

III.

Needs not the Muse in numbers now engage
To bring his various triumphs into view;—
Are they not writ in history's living page,
From far Assaye to famous Waterloo?
And so his laurel'd name aspiring grew
Unto the stature of a lofty tree;
Whose branches Time shall evermore renew,
And spread to utmost land and farthest sea;—
The meed of mighty deeds—fame's immortality!

* The noble Duke had visited the town and the site of the column, and had, of course, been welcomed with enthusiasm.

Digitized by Google

IV.

But he hath passed away*—and Britain's grief
At his departure, who may fitly tell?
Enough, deep reverence for their ancient chief
Came o'er the people—while each passing-bell,
With the loud cannon, rung his funeral knell.
And when, in after ages hither led,
They talk of him who could the conqueror quell,
Around this time-worn column as they tread,
Some bard's enduring verse shall hymn the noble dead.

V.

He who may wander o'er these hills, will stand,
And gaze, Neroche,† from off thy lofty brow;
And he will look o'er all the lovely land,
Until his heart with admiration glow;
But most on that fam'd vale‡ which lies below!
There are the meadows rich and orchards fair,
Farm-homes, round which the dark elms proudly grow,
Beneath whose shade the old and young repair,
While plenteous boards abound, and generous hearts are *there*.

* These stanzas were written soon after the noble Duke's decease. † Castle-Neroche, as it is commonly called, and probably the site of an ancient castle. ‡ The Vale of Taunton-Deane.

Digitized by Google

VI.

On Mar'lene's tower,* at length, his eye may rest,
A pile more beauteous he will rarely see;
Pride of its place, and glory of the west,
Proportion'd fine, light-pinnacled, and free,
Graceful it stands, above all rivalry!
And, sooth, 'tis sweet, at even-tide, to hear
Across the vale, in fitful melody,
Her pealing bells—bidding the heart good cheer,
Or drawing from its fount some sympathetic tear!

VII.

And now, O once familiar scenes, farewell!
I may not gaze upon your beauty more;
Nor time will serve for all that we might tell
Of deeds for freedom done in days of yore:—
And I might speak of him,† the bard who wore
His laureate chaplet from the virgin-Queen,[2]
Whom that fair town, though now forgotten, bore;
—But we must onward haste towards the scene
That ends our lengthening Lay—right welcome now,
I ween.

* The Tower of St. Mary Magdalene, Taunton, which has recently been rebuilt.

† Daniel.

Digitized by Google

VIII.

Yet hark! as late by Ile's near murmuring stream,
That spreads rich beauty o'er the vale below—
Glad shouts in fancy rise—as might beseem
The welcome of some hero—while the flow
Of joyous melody doth come and go
Upon the fitful breeze:—Round Jordan's seat,
With one heart intermingling, high and low,
The men of Somerset, friends, kindred, meet;[3]
From Afric's distant clime, her gallant Son to greet.

IX.

For he had been to seek the mystic source
Of sacred Nile! that foil'd through every age
The bolder spirits that would track his course;
Till Speke at length arose—dauntless yet sage,
And form'd with adverse fate long strife to wage,
Onward he strode, through trackless waste and wood,
And savage haunts—to fill his future page—
Until exultant by the marge he stood
Of broad Nyanza's lake—the fount of Nilus' flood!

Digitized by Google

X.

Behold! the scene is chang'd—and in the place
Of gay processions, a long train appears
Of dark funereal forms; where you may trace
The earthward stoop that sudden sorrow wears
Under some crushing ill—the grief that sears
The o'er-wrought heart, and shakes the manliest frame
With suppress'd feelings, all too deep for tears:—
But he hath triumph'd—whilst his ancient name
Blends ever with his own, and with his country's fame!

XI.

A patriot would not pass, without a pause,
That southern slope,[4] where long, in calm repose,
The Sea-chief* dwelt; who in his country's cause,
Like a bold eagle from his eyry, rose
And struck pale terror on her Gallic foes;
When, off Belle-Isle defeated, soon they fled
Port L'Orient to gain:—then, ere life's close,
Hither he came and died—while honours shed
Unfading lustre round his venerable head.

* Admiral Viscount Bridport.

Digitized by Google

XII.

Then on St. Rayne's bold hill the Wanderer stood;
A rural village* lying at his feet;—
And, far beyond, spread upland, plain, and wood,
Till Mindep and the broad horizon meet:—
But chief those eyes *that* cherish'd spot would greet,
Where his young hours of life and love were past;
It may be too of sorrow—but 'tis sweet
O'er early scenes some lingering look to cast;—
Though time and feeling tell *that* look may be the last!

XIII.

He can remember—though long years have fled—
Since first, a boy, he climb'd this airy brow—
He can remember when its lofty head
Rose bold and bare before him—not as now,
When near its summit dark pines thickly grow,
Lifting their spiral tops against the sky,
And shutting out green slope and lawn below,
With old familiar objects—such as lie [doth sigh.
Around our childhood's home, for which the heart

* Hinton St. George.

Digitized by Google

XIV.

Again the prospect opes—and now, behold
A lordly mansion,* with its wide demesne,
Where noble men have dwelt in days of old,
And beauteous women graced the stately scene:
There rosy Mirth mid festive boards hath been,
When guests came gathering from the joyous chase;
While in its halls those warrior-forms are seen,
Equipp'd for distant fields, from whom we trace
The features living now, that mark'd their ancient race.†

XV.

What strange mutations Time doth ever make!—
When past with present objects we compare,
What old remembrances anew will wake! [where
Though clump and belt usurp the landscape,
Stood the long avenue and gay parterre;
Brave woods yet clothe those swelling heights above;
And still the lengthening "lime-tree walk" is there:
While mid the circle of that beechen grove,
Swift Dian‡ still may seem to seek Endymion's love.

* Hinton House, the family seat of the Earls Poulett.

† Since those lines were written, it is our lot to record, three sons in early manhood, have prematurely passed away from this terrestrial scene.

‡ A statue of Diana in Hinton Park.

Digitized by Google

XVI.

And now that village-tower doth greet his eye,
Back'd by a woody screen—and he could tell
Where orchards stand and pleasant gardens lie,
The quiet lanes, the walks he loved so well,
And each grey roof, where old friends wont to dwell:—
While faithful memory brings again to light
A thousand incidents which then befel;
All lovely things that met his youthful sight,
Some sweet employ by day, some social joy at night.

XVII.

Then came that ancient dwelling* into view
Where first his eyes beheld the morning-ray,
And infancy to later childhood grew:—
A monastery in the olden day,
Where dwelt some Friars of Augustine gray:—
And still a portion† of that pile is seen
In which, tradition tells, they met to pray:
And sooth a fitter spot could ne'er have been,
With quiet lawns around, and bowery orchards green.

* The Priory. † Called the Chapel.

Digitized by Google

XVIII.

There stands the village-cross, and on its head
A dial marks the flight of time—below
Where the worn earth betrays the frequent tread,
Seat over seat in lessening circle grow;—
Thither the old, with sportive striplings, go,
When welcome leisure waits at evening time,
And merry tales are mixed with those of woe—
While aged men boast of their stalwart prime,
Until the hour of rest comes with the nightly chime.

XIX.

And still upon that neighbouring knap are seen
Those ancient trees*—a venerable pair!
Two centuries have mark'd their summer green,
As many winters viewed their branches bare—
While those our youth had known, would gather there
Beneath their shade, to sit and talk awhile:
Oh, where are now the gallant and the fair,
Their "quips and cranks," the laugh and sunny smile,
That with such magic power, those moments would beguile.

* The horse-chesnut.

Digitized by Google

XX.

But chiefly *there* will memory, lingering, muse
On other days—where the green lawn doth spread
Before the door; and still his eye reviews
That mountain-ash, bedeck'd with berries red,
On which the missel-thrush and blackbird fed:—
And then that shelter'd border doth recall
The sweet spring flow'rs that grew upon its bed,
With summer lilies—while that bay-tree tall
Still spreads its living leaves against the old grey wall.*

XXI.

And pleasant is it now, once more to trace, [stray;
Those garden-paths, where childhood lov'd to
And still, methinks, in fancy we can trace
The forms of many things, now past away,
That won affection in our youthful day:—
Once more doth favourite plant or flower appear;
While fallen trees, uprising from decay,
In bloom profuse again their branches rear;—
And though the bees are gone, their hum is in our ear.

* The reader will bear in mind that the above stanzas were written many years since—we cannot answer for their fidelity *now*.

Digitized by Google

XXII.

There are the orchards, and we know them well,
They come like old friends to our memory;
Their various kind and bearing we might tell,
And where the finest fruits were wont to be;
Though leaves alone are all that now we see:—
And 'twas a joyous sight, at gathering time,
To view the ripe heaps under every tree;
Whence comes that generous juice, when in its prime,
Which forms the glory of our western soil and clime.

XXIII.

And at the bottom of that verdant steep,
Where primroses, in spring, are always seen,
A little meadow lies; enough to keep
A needful cow, or two, upon its green:—
And there, when summer skies were all serene,
The merry hay-makers would gladly meet;—
E'en now doth fancy view that cheerful scene,
The tedded grass with clover breathing sweet,
And still their joyous songs those echoing woods repeat.

Digitized by Google

XXIV.

Haply the worldling or the wit may smile—
If such, perchance, may light upon our page—
Or it may raise some carping Critic's bile,
That simple scenes, like these, our verse engage,
Which ne'er can interest so refin'd an age!
But there hath been, in earlier times, a day
When rural themes employed the wiser sage;
In tuneful numbers shared the poet's lay,
And won, fit meed of song, the bright unfading bay.*

XXV.

How beautiful that fine old tower uprears
Its noble form against the evening sky!
While as of eld the sacred pile appears;—
Recalling to the time-worn heart and eye
The memory of those that round it lie:—
And now among their silent graves we tread,
While of the many, some demand a sigh;
Though bootless are the tears that mortals shed
O'er the dull ashes of the long-departed dead!

* The Author might apologise for dwelling on subjects which may appear somewhat *personal;* but if true to our *common nature,* they are no longer so. Shall he cancel them?—Let them stay.

Digitized by Google

XXVI.

There stands that ancient yew, though on its head
The reckless storms of centuries have fell;—
How many generations, that have fled,
Could it recount, if voice were his to tell!
How often heard the merry marriage-bell,
The curfew sounding slow at evening grey,
At solemn intervals, the passing-knell
That ushers-in the freed soul from its clay,
To regions of dread night, or realms of endless day!

XXVII.

Here, now, the Wanderer's pilgrimage must end,
And, with it, close his song—that sooth hath been
A fit companion and a joyous friend,
To cheer him onward through each varied scene:—
And when from this inferior orb-terrene,
He shall have past, in humble hope, away;
Then rest his dust beneath this daisied-green[5]—
Content, if some congenial spirits say,
"His Country was the theme and glory of his Lay."

Digitized by Google

NOTES

TO FOURTH CANTO.

PART II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NOTES.

NOTE I. Page 363.

On Bleadon's brow a lofty column stands,

"It would be an object of curious research (says a writer in the Illustrated London News) to trace and record the various circumstances which have led to the selection of certain localities in England, for the title of peerages, and have thus brought places of comparatively unlettered fame into prominent distinction. The conqueror of Vittoria, in the choice of the title of his Dukedom, presented a remarkable instance of the above fact; although we are not aware that the cause of the selection has been publicly stated.

"There are two towns in the empire which bear the name of Wellington; one in Shropshire, and the second on the Devonshire border of Somerset: the latter being that selected by the Duke. This is an ancient and respectable market Town, and a parish, situate near the Tone, in the Hundred of Kingsbury West, in the union of its own name, and on the line of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, distant seven miles from Taunton, and twenty-four from Exeter. The Duke of Wellington was lord of the manor, which appears to be an ancient one, having been held by the proud Duke of Somerset, who was beheaded for high treason, *temp.* Edward VI. The manor was previously held by several Bishops; among whom was Asser, Bishop of

Digitized by Google

Sherborne, preceptor to Alfred the Great, who was presented to the manor by that Monarch. On Asser's death the manor was transferred to the Bishop of the newly-erected diocese of Wells, by whose successor it was held in the time of the Domesday Survey, in which it is written Walintone.

"The parish church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, is a handsome Gothic building. At the west end is an embattled tower, adorned with pinnacles, having a turret on the south side. In the interior is a beautiful monument to Sir John Popham, who held the high office of Chief Justice of England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and James I.

"In the Civil War, at the period of the memorable siege of Taunton, the rebels gained possession of Wellington by stratagem, and held out for some time against the King's forces, under Sir Richard Grenville. The garrison was, no doubt, (says a contributor to *Notes and Queries, No.* 32), at the large house built by Chief Justice Sir John Popham, in the town of Wellington, and which, though of great strength, was much damaged on that occasion, and shortly fell into ruin."

Extracted from the Illustrated London News, of November 20th, 1852, in which also appears two very correct views of the town and monument.

NOTE II. Page 366.

And I might speak of him, the bard who wore
His laureate chaplet from the virgin-Queen,

Headley, in his "Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry," has the following observations on the poet Daniel.

"The dialogue between Ulysses and the Syren, from one of this gentleman's plays, which Dr. Percy has given us, will give the reader no very exalted opinion of the author's abilities;

Digitized by Google

the same specimen is quoted in the 'Muses' Library,' though not singly; it is neat and unaffected. But Daniel has a right to the merit of still higher excellence. Though very rarely sublime, he has skill in the pathetic, and his pages are disgraced with neither pedantry nor conceit. We find, both in his poetry and prose, such a legitimate and rational flow of language, as approaches nearer the style of the eighteenth than the sixteenth century, and of which we may safely assert, that it will never become obsolete. He certainly was the Atticus of his day. It seems to have been his error to have entertained too great a diffidence of his own abilities. Constantly contented with the sedate propriety of good sense, which he no sooner attains than he seems to rest satisfied, though his resources, had he but made the effort, would have carried him much further. In thus escaping censure, he is not always entitled to praise. From not endeavouring to be great, he sometimes misses of being respectable. The constitution of his mind seems often to have failed him in the sultry and exhausting regions of the muses; for, though generally neat, easy, and perspicuous, he too frequently grows slack, languid, and enervated. In perusing his long, historical poem, we grow sleepy at the dead ebb of his narrative, notwithstanding being occasionally relieved with some touches of the pathetic. Unfortunate in the choice of his subject, he seems fearful of supplying its defects by digressional embellishment; instead of fixing upon one of a more fanciful cast, which the natural coolness of his judgment would necessarily have corrected, he has cooped himself up within the limited and narrow pale of dry events; instead of casting his eye on the general history of human nature, and giving his genius a range over her immeasurable fields, he has confined himself to an abstract diary of fortune; instead of presenting us with pictures of truth from the effects of the passions, he has versified the truth of action only; he has sufficiently, therefore, shewn the historian, but by no means the poet. For, to use a sentiment of Sir Wm. Davenant's,

Digitized by Google

'Truth, narrative and past, is the idol of historians (who worship a dead thing), and truth operative, and by its effects continually alive, is the mistress of poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason.' Daniel has often the softness of Rowe, without his effeminacy. In his Complaint of Cleopatra he has caught Ovid's manner very happily, as he has no obscurities either of style or language, neither pedantry nor affectation, all of which have occurred in banishing from use the works of his contemporaries. The oblivion he has met with is peculiarly undeserved; he has shared their fate, though innocent of their faults. Daniel enjoyed the friendship and the praises of the most eminent men of his age. Drayton thus speaks of him:

'Among these, Samuel Daniel, whom if I
May speak of, but to censure do deny,
Only have heard some wise men him rehearse,
To be too much historian in verse.
His rhymes were smooth, his metres well did close,
But yet his manner better fitted prose.'

Of Poets and Poesy.

"Edmond Bolton and Gabriel Harvey, the former a professed critic, and the latter the friend of Spenser, and a promoter of the literature of his country, both mention Daniel with respect, as a polisher and purifier of the English language. W. Browne calls him 'well-languag'd Daniel.' B. II. Song 2.—Spenser has left Daniel's character. See Colin Clout's Come Home Again, vol. IV. p. 276, Hughes's edit.—Ben Jonson, in his conversation with Drummond, has observed, that through the 'Civil Wars' there is not a single battle. The remark is shrewd but not true. He likewise adds, which is still more exceptionable, that Daniel is no poet. There seems some envy in this. Daniel has himself hinted, that he outlived his reputation:

——but years have done this wrong,
To make me write too much, and live too long."

Dedicat. of Philotas.

Digitized by Google

"He was born at Taunton, in Somersetshire, was a commoner of Magdalen Hall, Oxon; became gentleman extraordinary, and afterwards groom of the privy-chamber to the Queen Anne, James the First's consort. He succeeded Spenser (who died about 1598) as Poet Laureat. He died at Beckington, in Somersetshire, in 1619, and was honoured with a monument in that church, at the sole expense of the justly-celebrated Anne, Countess of Pembroke, to whom he had been tutor, and to whose poetry and patronage he pays many flattering and grateful compliments in the dedication to the tragedy of Cleopatra. We are told by Dr. Percy, that the same lady, in a full-length of herself at Appleby Castle, in Cumberland, had a small portrait of Daniel inserted."

NOTE III. Page 367.

—Round Jordan's seat,
With one heart intermingling, high and low,
The men of Somerset, friends, kindred, meet;

The house at Jordans, the family mansion of the Spekes, is not more than two miles, "as the crow flies," from the heights of Neroche, whence it may be seen in the vale below. It was to this place—the scene of his early associations—the now-celebrated African traveller returned, after his successful pursuit of the sources of the Nile. That he met with a cordial and triumphant reception from his friends and countrymen, was no more than might have been expected: but this bright and happy reunion, following years of toil and danger, was, not long after, succeeded by a sudden and most melancholy end.

Everyone is acquainted with the fatal accident, whilst in

Digitized by Google

pursuit of the sports of the field, which deprived him of existence here, and his friends and the world of one of its worthiest ornaments.

The Author avails himself of the opportunity of adding to this brief notice the following extracts, which have met his attention, on the late lamented Traveller.

The *Inverness Courier*, in an article on Captain Speke, has the following passage, contributed by Speke's friend and fellow-traveller, Captain Grant:—"Captain Speke entered the East India Company's service when a lad of seventeen. He soon became a special favourite with the officers of the 46th Bengal Native Infantry, and he exchanged into their regiment, and served in it during the Punjaub campaign under Lord Gough. During his Indian career, in consequence of his artless and gentle, though fearless, disposition, combined with a love of all manly sports, he formed many sincere and lasting friendships. Whether in the camp or field he was foremost as a daring rider, and he was the first to defy the frosts and snows of the Himalayas. In private life, though always amongst the light-hearted, he had such unflinching perseverance and determination of character, that he could deny himself any gratification that stood in the way of his schemes or dreams of adventure. Having hunted and killed most of the Indian fauna, and mapped for friends and future travellers the localities where he found sport, his thoughts turned towards Africa and the Nile. The idea, once formed, was held with characteristic firmness."

The writer of a paper in Blackwood's Magazine remarks, after some observations on the pleasure Captain Speke took in the society of young people, he proceeds:—"This genial assimilation with young folks and their enjoyments, was a very pleasing feature, but it was one of many that went together to form the noble simplicity of his nature. This was shewn powerfully in the way in which he bore his honours. Both when he returned triumphant, and when he issued the wondrous narrative of his difficulties and their

Digitized by Google

conquest, the great lionising world was roaring at his heels, demanding him as its prey, but he heeded it not. He did not, like vulgar repudiators of popularity, let it overtake him, that he might conspicuously repel it, but he sat quiet at his work and among his friends, avoiding all occasion of notoriety. To this line of conduct he made one characteristic exception. Like many Englishmen who become famous, he had a little world of his own, in his own County of Somerset, where his social position was possibly an object of as much real pride and satisfaction as his wide fame. He belonged to an old County family of worshipful repute for many centuries. So when one of the Spekes of Jordans became famous over the world, his fame was part of the property of the district, in which its inhabitants must partake; and in his kindly nature he submitted with the best grace to the ovation offered him in his native district, knowing that to evade it would be a sore mortification to old friends and good neighbours."

NOTE IV. Page 368.

A patriot would not pass, without a pause,
That southern slope—

On which stands Cricket Lodge, the residence of the late Admiral Alexander Hood, Viscount and Baron Bridport, who was the son of the Rev. Samuel Hood, Vicar of Butleigh, Somersetshire, and afterwards of Thorncombe, Devonshire; and younger brother to Admiral Lord Viscount Hood. His promotion was rapid, and in 1793, had attained to the rank of Vice Admiral of the Red, when he was immediately after appointed to a command in the Channel fleet, under Earl Howe; and in the glorious victory of the 1st of June, in the following year,

Digitized by Google

he bore a distinguished part. In consequence of his valour on this occasion, Sir Alexander was created Baron Bridport, of Cricket St. Thomas.

On June 22nd, 1795, Lord Bridport captured three seventy-fours, after a sharp action of three hours with a French fleet of twelve sail of the line, the remainder escaping into port L'Orient.

On the 15th March, 1796, he succeeded Earl Howe in command of the Channel fleet; which he long held with honour to himself and credit to the service. In 1801 he was still further advanced in the peerage for his distinguished services, and was created a Viscount, when he still retained the title by which he had become so well known. He died on the 2nd May, 1814, in the eighty-seventh year of his age.

NOTE V. Page 376.

Then rest his dust beneath this daisied green—

When Sir Francis Chantrey, the eminent sculptor, was building his mausoleum, he said to Allan Cunningham, his friend and principal assistant, that he would make the vault large enough to contain him also. "No," said Allan; "I should not like, even when I am dead, to be shut up! I would far rather rest where the daisies will grow over my head!"

Note Supplementary.—As one object of the Author, while writing the preceding poem, was to notice those individuals, natives of the County, that lay in his way, who might have been eminent for virtue or talent—he regretted to find, after the

Digitized by Google

First Canto, Part I., the only appropriate place in which it could be introduced, had gone through the press, that he had, by inadvertence, overlooked that distinguished Soldier and accomplished Scholar, Sir William Draper,

MANILLA'S gallant conqueror and CHATHAM'S friend.

He therefore avails himself of this opportunity, at the close of his Notes, to add the following brief extract respecting him.

"Sir William Draper, a native of Bristol, was educated at Eton, and at King's College, Cambridge. Entered the army and went to the East Indies in the Company's service, ranking as a Colonel in the army with Lawrence and Clive. In 1761 he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier in the expedition to Belleisle. In 1763 he conquered Manilla, in conjunction with Admiral Cornish. The colours taken at this conquest were presented to King's College, Cambridge, and hung up in their beautiful chapel, and the conqueror was rewarded with a red riband. Upon the reduction of the 79th regiment, which had served so gloriously in the East Indies, his Majesty, unsolicited by him, gave him the 16th regiment of foot as an equivalent.

"Sir William's celebrated controversy with Junius may be seen in the edition of "Junius's Letters," published by Woodfall, in 1812."

Near the entrance to Manilla Hall, the late residence of the General, at Clifton, were erected by him, a Cenotaph and an Obelisk, the former to commemorate those warriors of the 79th regiment, who so bravely fell in the various battles in Asia; and the latter as a memorial of the private friendship existing between the great Earl of Chatham and himself. It bears the following inscription:—

GULIELMO PITT, Comiti De Chatham
hoc amicitiæ privatæ testimonium,
simul et honoris publici monumentum,
posuit GULIELMUS DRAPER.

Digitized by Google

ERRATUM.

At foot-note, page 259, for *Gleck*, read *Gleeh*.

I. E. CHILLCOTT, STEAM PRESS, BRISTOL.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google